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CONTRACT CORRECTING, THE USE OF LAY READERS IN THE HIGH SCHOOL COMPOSITION PROGRAM.

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ENGLISH COMPOSITION CLASSES IN THREE HIGH SCHOOLS WERE USED FOR AN EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM TO SHOW THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LAY READERS IN GRADING STUDENT PAPERS. THE PROGRAM WAS SPECIFIED AS "CONTRACT CORRECTING," OR STATED IN ANOTHER WAY, IT WAS AN ATTEMPT TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF AN ADEQUATE WRITING PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITHOUT THE HEAVY CORRECTING BURDEN WHICH SUCH A PROGRAM NECESSITATES FOR THE ENGLISH TEACHER. THE EXPERIMENTAL CLASSES WERE DIVIDED INTO 3 GROUPS--(1) 12 CLASSES IN WHICH CONTRACT LAY READERS GRADED COMPOSITIONS, WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE TEACHER, (2) 12 MORE CLASSES IN WHICH THE TEACHERS CORRECTED THE COMPOSITIONS THEMSELVES, AND (3) A CONTROL GROUP OF CLASSES WHERE A SECOND TEACHER GROUP WORKED WITH THE LAY READERS WHO CORRECTED THE COMPOSITIONS. ALL STUDENTS IN THE EXPERIMENT WERE GIVEN A SERIES OF IMPROMPTU THEME TESTS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR. LAY READERS WHO GRADED A PART OF THE PAPERS HAD NO KNOWLEDGE AS TO WHEN EACH WAS WRITTEN. CLASSES WERE COMPARED USING COVARIANCE ANALYSIS. PROGRAM RESULTS REVEALED NO GREAT DEGREE OF IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF STUDENT WRITING, THOUGH THE AMOUNT OF WRITING INCREASED WHEN LAY READERS WERE INVOLVED. THE LAY READERS ALSO PROVIDED SOME TEACHER RELIEF IN GRADING AND SEEMED TO AFFECT IN A POSITIVE WAY THE GENERAL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ENGLISH COMPOSITION COURSE. (JH)

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by

EDWIN H. SAUER

Report to the Cooperative Research Program of the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and to the School and University Program for Research and Development

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PREFACE

In the summer of 1957 a Committee was formed at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education to consider the possibility of the use of lay readers in the Newton High School English composition program, as part of Harvard's School and University Program for Research and Development, a series of educational research projects operating with support of the Fund for the Advancement of Education in the school systems of Newton, Concord, and Lexington, Massachusetts. The Committee consisted of Dr. Edwin H. Sauer and Dr. John Carroll, Harvard; Mr. Floyd Rinker, Miss Mary Lanigan, and Miss Gertrude Creedon of Newton High School. Plans were drawn up, and the program went into action at Newton in the fall of 1957.

A grant from the United States Office of Health, Education, and Welfare for the beginning of the academic year 1958-59 made continuation of the program possible for a three-year period, including extension of the use of lay readers to two additional communities. These became the communities of Concord and Quincy, Massachusetts. The report which follows is a record of the three years' activity.

As the program has expanded, Committee membership has changed. Serving on it at the conclusion of the project are Dr. Sauer, Dr. Carroll, Mr. Rinker (ex officio), Miss Lanigan, Miss Creedon (ex officio), Mr. Harold O'Connor, Concord High School, and Mr. Herschel Billingsley, of the Quincy Public Schools.

This report is the joint authorship of Dr. Sauer and Dr. Paul M. Ford, Harvard Research Assistant on the project, with valuable assistance from Mr. Theodore Guberman, Harvard College Faculty Aide to Dr. Sauer.

The interest and energy of all who participated in the program is deeply appreciated by the Committee and hereby acknowledged.

E.H.S.

Cambridge, Massachusetts
June 1961

CHAPTER ONE

Philosophy and Introduction

A discussion of any program designed to aid teachers of composition in the secondary school should begin properly with some attention to a philosophy of composition. Schemes to facilitate the quantity of high school writing and, hopefully, the quality, must begin with consideration of the purposes of a writing program. In short, what of genuine value for the student, does a coherent arrangement of composition attempt to accomplish?

The following assumptions about a writing program in secondary schools seem legitimate:

1. It looks beyond the mere writing exercise to see that the objectives have to do ultimately with the organization of thought. Work primarily in exposition and persuasion makes the student aware that throughout his life and whatever his station he will be called upon regularly to organize his thinking in clear logical patterns and that writing exercises are an effective means of helping him to see the reciprocal relation between thinking and expression. This is not to insist on a narrow practicality in all of the writing exercises but only to help the student to understand that the written expression of thought can be a means of learning not only what he wants to say but also the most expeditious and forceful ways of saying it.
2. It is a program *for all*, not just for the superior student or college-bound youngster; the orderly communication of thought is constantly demanded by modern life, even of people of limited intellectual enterprise. Furthermore, the composition program need *not differ too greatly because of varying abilities in the students*. Our expectations of the students will differ, but, relatively speaking, the assignments can be the same for all, the majority of these dealing with the shaping of thought in ordered paragraphs. Thus the program will probably be organized around exercises in clarity, logical analysis, critical thinking, definition, elementary semantics, and principles of argumentation; but there is room also for purposeful narration and description.

3. It is a *writing* program, not a course in grammar or literature or linguistics, though elements of all three, as well as of other disciplines, might at times be functional in assisting the understanding of what good writing is.
4. It is a program which avoids concentration on composition error —which does something other than focus the teacher's activity on mechanical blunders and bad writing. Students should be made aware of the many varieties of good writing and, through analysis, helped to see the nature of the achievement.
5. It is a program which insists that adequate attention be given to evaluation of the papers. It resists an automatic manner of marking them—the employing merely of a mechanical set of symbols (*sp* for spelling, *p* for punctuation, *d* for diction, *cst* for faulty construction, *k* for awkward). The very differences in any set of student papers are sufficient indication that no automatic method of marking them or mechanical set of symbols could in any way help the authors and call attention to the individual difficulties. The one who marks the paper must be directly personal and individually analytic. Marking must be a series of marginal questions constantly asking the student to re-examine what he has written, and occasionally re-writing for the student what the teacher's more informed sense of style would indicate that the student intended. In short, the marking of the paper, beginning with appreciation of and comments on the *successes* of the paper, would then go on, not to destructive and negative underscoring of all its errors and deficiencies, but to a series of inquiries of the writer which would cause him, in revision, to *re-think* the paper and bring it to greater clarity and order.

Very few teachers of high school English are likely to quarrel with these assumptions, and most would agree with the standard for the high school English class: one theme per week. Many, if not all, will agree with the assertion of Dr. James B. Conant in *The American High School Today* that 50% of the high school English program should be given to composition. Yet many will be forced to admit that they do not have students write a paper a week and that giving 50% of class time to composition is impossible. The problem is one of teacher shortages and excessive teacher loads. Dr. Conant suggests that no teacher of English should handle more than 100 students each day; this, presumably, would mean four classes of twenty-five students each. The reality, however, is nothing like this—in most places. Instead, teachers are likely to have five or six classes daily, with from thirty to forty students per class. In his visits to fifty comprehensive high schools, Dr. Conant found that the average pupil load for teachers of

English was 160-200. With such loads the composition program must suffer. Even when the Conant ideal is reached, the marking burden is still excessive. In the issue of September 14, 1959, *Time* Magazine reported: "To produce one theme a week, Conant suggested that no English teacher should handle more than 100 students. But correcting 100 themes at ten minutes each takes 17 hours of work—2½ hours seven nights a week. Chicago would need 330 more teachers, adding $2,300,000 to the budget." And even if Boards of Education and School Committees were willing and able to appropriate such additional expenditures, the teachers could not be found. We are not training teachers of English in any thing like sufficient numbers to meet a demand of such magnitude. Where is the school to go for help?

Plainly, it must go outside the school—that is, to the community at large. The school has always felt privileged to draw on the resources of the community for a variety of needs, particularly in the fields of vocational training, homemaking, driver education, and others. But there has been some timidity or wholly understandable caution about asking the community to assist with the academic program. Problems of standards of preparation, training, and even accreditation immediately arise, along with a proliferation of bureaucratic details requiring another corps of secretaries and clerks.

The assistance which the school must seek has to be of a professionally non-competitive nature—that is, the academic status of the teacher must in no way be challenged. Only distress can result from any recruitment of the community which makes teacher substitutes of men and women who were not responsibly trained as teachers. If the effective teaching of composition requires more teachers of English, then—ultimately—more teachers we must have, and it is a nation's moral responsibility to see that we get them.

Meanwhile, the teachers are not available, and temporary or stopgap measures must be introduced. In every community there are housewives who were English majors in college or even, possibly, former teachers of English, or former editorial assistants on newspapers and magazines. In spite of family obligations they have free hours each week which can profitably be spent in community service. With training and orientation they can read English compositions.

The contract correcting program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education was designed to utilize the services of women in the communities of Newton, Concord, and Quincy as *assistants* to teachers of English in composition. They were lay readers who *worked for teachers* by doing the routine tasks of evaluating student prose. Cautious at first about the range of their efficiency, readers were inclined to do only the spade work of marking flagrant errors in

mechanics—grammar, spelling, punctuation. But as they became an intimately functioning part of the English course—through visits to classes and through conferences with teachers and students—they were able to assume the whole burden of estimating student accomplishment, even—in some cases—to the point of determining the final grade. Several teachers have attested confidence in readers to the extent of returning student papers without examination of the reader's work.

While the use of lay readers, therefore, is planned as an emergency measure for the benefit of teachers of English, there is an interesting reciprocity in community relations. A constructive, and even at times amusing, by-product of the lay readers program has been the degree of identification between the readers and the school. Readers have tended to become the arch-defenders of the schools and curricula they have served. It is not unusual in Newton, Concord and Quincy to see teachers and readers playing bridge together after, that is, a spirited discussion of the writing progress of *their* students.

Clearly demonstrable in the report that follows is the gain of teacher relief—easy enough to prove. Equally clear is the evidence of reader commitment—of an eagerness on the part of the community to serve the school. But the program was not designed fundamentally to serve teachers and readers. Its only justification is service to students. If it has not served them, it has failed. This report is to be judged primarily on whether or not we have served students.

CHAPTER TWO

A Brief History of the Project

Contract correcting, then, attempts to solve the problem of an adequate writing program for the student without the heavy correcting burden which such a program necessitates for the teacher. The project has investigated whether or not members of the community, qualified through college preparation, teaching experience, or journalistic activities are able to act as lay readers to aid the teacher in correcting high school compositions. Review and refresher programs, consisting of workshops, conferences with teachers, and visits to English classes, would serve to prepare these lay readers with the specific training necessary for the job. The program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, a project of the School and University Program for Research and Development, operated at Newton High School, Newtonville, Massachusetts during the academic years 1957-58, 1958-59, and 1959-60; at the Concord High School in Concord, Massachusetts in 1958-59 and 1959-60 and in the Quincy, Massachusetts, junior high schools in 1959-60. The program was subsidized by grants from the Fund for the Advancement of Education and from the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. It was continued at Quincy in 1960-61 with funds from the Ford Foundation and in both Newton and Concord with community funds.

Six lay readers worked with six teachers at Newton High School, Newtonville, Massachusetts, in grades eleven and twelve during the 1957-58 school year. Four other teachers not served by readers were used for control purposes. The project was administered by a committee headed by Dr. Edwin H. Sauer.

The six correctors were chosen from the twenty who had attended a workshop conducted by Dr. Sauer in the summer of 1957. These twenty had been selected from about sixty applicants. Readers were offered a total of 200 correcting hours, forty of which were to be spent in conference with students and teachers. Readers were paid $2.00 per hour. The committee asked that 175 hours be completed before the Newton spring vacation so that the evaluation of the project could begin before the end of the year.

The project was designed to investigate two effects: (1) the direct influence of the corrector on the students' writing performance and (2) the extent to which the teacher can do a better job of teaching in the classroom and of grading the themes of sections not served by the corrector, on the assumption that he shares his load equally with the corrector.

Testing for the project, planned by Dr. John B. Carroll, consisted of impromptu themes given in both September and April and based on Educational Testing Service writing assignments which could be written on twice in order to produce "comparable" themes (The dependent variable was the amount of gain shown; the themes were graded by ETS readers with no knowledge of whether they were written in September or March).

For all themes which they read correctors keep a record of the nature of the assignment, the number of hours spent in reading the total number of papers, and the average amount of time spent on each paper. Teachers keep a similar record for the themes of identical nature.

Total personnel involved in the project were: ten Newton High School English teachers—six served by correctors, and four used for control purposes; six lay readers, chosen from a total of twenty women who attended the workshop; three members of the Newton High School staff, to serve as committee members; one of these was also a teacher served by one of the readers; one graduate student of the Harvard Graduate School of Education as research assistant; two members of the staff of the Harvard Graduate School of Education on a part-time basis. In addition, part-time secretarial help was used for the project, as of course were personnel at both Harvard and the Educational Testing Service required for scoring impromptu themes.

All six contract correctors completed the year with their original teachers, and on the basis of committee observation, teacher report, and student comment, these readers performed their duties satisfactorily.

The greatest shortcoming of the first year's program was the failure to include teachers in the workshop. As a result, the teachers had to spend a great deal of extra time at the beginning of the year adjusting the reader to the methods and standards of the teacher and Newton High School practices generally. Moreover, operation of the plan has revealed the necessity for regular planning sessions which include members of the committee, readers, and especially teachers. However, because these training aspects had been completed throughout the first year, the readers were able to provide a great deal more relief the second year.

There was general agreement that the outstanding contribution of

the project in its first year was the conference between reader and student. Students were given more individual attention to their difficulties than would have been possible without the use of readers, and there is general belief that these conferences improved writing ability.

The evaluation of the Contract Correcting program for the academic year 1957-58 was based on the following materials and procedures:

1. Impromptu writing test scores of students to see whether or not significant improvement in the quality of student writing has occurred. These were scores of impromptu themes written in September and April on the same subject.
2. Data gathered from a detailed questionnaire submitted to teachers, readers, students, and parents eliciting evaluation and comment.
3. Record sheets kept by teachers and readers indicating the nature of assignments, time taken for reading of papers, and progress in speed of reading, these materials to be brought together on a master sheet prepared by the research assistant.
4. The relation of progress and achievement to student test scores gathered at the beginning of the project.

The following is a digest of the questionnaire sent to the teachers in the project: The readers' conferences with students were generally successful. Four of the teachers felt that the readers did save them measurable time in correcting themes. Most of the teachers felt that they were able to assign additional themes, or at least, make some writing assignments longer because of the assistance of the reader. In no way did the readers interfere with the teachers' relationships with the students. Two of the teachers stated that discussing students and sharing views with the reader illuminated the teacher-student relationships.

Many of the readers required a great deal of time which the teacher was unable to give or to give only with inconvenience. Several of the teachers stated that the readers had to be shown how to make their comments and corrections on the papers more helpful. Discussing the objectives of each assignment also took a great deal of teacher time. However, four of the teachers felt that the reader had saved considerable time for them, especially at the end of the year. Nearly all of the teachers felt that more time should be spent by the reader in conference with the students. And nearly all the teachers felt that class visits by the reader were essential.

Three of the teachers felt that the reader delayed the return of papers to the student. Three of the readers, however, said that the flow of papers was quite irregular and inconvenienced them greatly.

Suggestions for the training of readers:

1. Readers should be trained to correct constructively and to write comments which are helpful to the students.

2. Readers should be imbued with a general sense of their obligation to the program and should realize that the program is not a matter of their own convenience.
3. Readers should be instructed in the conduct of conferences.
4. Readers should be available for more than one year.

Also, the following suggestions for the direction of teachers were made:

1. Teachers should be more thoroughly instructed in the details of the program; e.g., the administration of identical themes, their responsibility for enforcing student conference attendance, and their role in transporting themes.
2. Time required by the program should be provided for in the teacher's schedule.
3. Teachers should always be assigned to the program on a voluntary basis.

All of the teachers expressed willingness to continue with the program during another year, though hoping that they would be able to have the same reader and that their suggestions listed above could be worked into the operational details.

The following is a summary of a questionnaire distributed to the readers:

Most of the readers felt that the workshop experience had been very helpful, but that the following should be included for the next year: practice in the actual correction of student themes; earlier introduction to the cooperating teacher and her standards, as well as the texts used by the teacher; instruction in the purpose and conduct of student conferences; introduction to the organizational set-up and procedures at Newton; background on the students as individuals and as classes; a thorough review of English grammar; some outline of the plan of study for the coming year. The readers desired, in addition, the following assistance from teachers: information about the purpose and nature of each assignment, information about the students and the class, and mutual discussion of the reader's work with the teacher.

All of the readers felt they were competent to grade papers after an initial experience of a month or two. However, they qualified their statements by saying that they needed a clear idea of the assignment and occasional supervision by the teacher.

The readers stated that conferences with students were followed by improvement in the students' work. However, the poorer students showed little interest in the conferences and little improvement during the first year. All of the readers felt that the conferences helped them to know and understand the students, and increased the interest of both student and reader.

Most of the readers expressed qualified approval of the project, despite complaints about its operation in the first year. They felt that its success depended upon the relationship established between the teacher and the reader. Some felt that benefits from the project would be greater in a smaller school with a less crowded schedule and more student-teacher contact.

A questionnaire was also distributed to a limited number of students selected by the teachers. A total of thirty students are represented in the responses. Within a single class there is considerable inconsistency, and very few generalizations are possible.

Fourteen students said that they did enough writing this year, and twenty-four said that they did more writing than in previous years (an observation which may be due to the students being in a higher grade level). *All* of the students felt that their writing had improved during this year. Twenty students felt that this improvement resulted from the conferences with the readers, or through closer attention to their errors. Eight students felt that there had been no disadvantages in the use of the contract corrector. Fifteen students remarked that the reader was able to mark effectively all types of assignments. Eleven students felt that the program would operate effectively in any grade and curriculum, and nine felt that the program should be introduced before the senior year, even as early as junior high. Seventeen of the thirty students said that their papers were slower in being returned because of the reader. Twenty-three students felt that there were not enough conferences with the reader or that they were too short. And finally, twenty-three students said that they would be satisfied to have their papers read by a corrector again, their reasons ranging from unusual improvement in their grades, to more specific help with their errors.

A questionnaire was also sent to a number of parents selected by the teachers. Their answers unfortunately betray little knowledge of the program. This is due possibly to the fact that publicity of SUPRAD projects has been kept to a minimum, though Newton teachers involved in Contract Correcting were encouraged to make the project clear to any parents who were concerned about it. In general, one-half to two-thirds of the twenty-one parents who responded to the questionnaire said that their children had benefited from the use of the contract corrector. The parents reported that the students had been helped by the conferences and the interest that the readers took in the students. Many felt that the students were doing much more writing than previously. Fifteen of the twenty-one parents recommended the continuation of the project at Newton and its extension to

other school systems as a remedy to the present teacher shortage and the many demands on the teacher's time.

For the year 1958-59 two of the readers were replaced because they moved to new communities. The two were replaced by two of the number who had attended the workshop the year before. The new team of six then attended a workshop refresher in preparation for the second year. Four teachers not served by correctors were again used for control purposes. Also, in 1958-59 the project was introduced at Concord High School, Concord, Massachusetts. Two readers were used here. These were chosen from a group of ten who participated in a workshop held at Concord in September, 1958, conducted by Dr. Sauer.

Because the volume and quality of writing at Newton High School has ostensibly always been high, it was decided by the Committee to test another aspect of Contract Correcting at Newton during this year: the teacher-relief factor. Controls were relaxed; each of the six readers was assigned to a teacher. In other words, the Committee was interested to see whether or not correctors save large amounts of time for teachers so that teachers can perform other professional tasks. The results of a teacher poll indicated that the relaxed controls combined with the experience of the previous year made the readers much more helpful. Even though the major objective at Newton this year was teacher relief, Contract Correcting resulted in a larger number of writing assignments.

All six readers had difficulty fulfilling the eighty hours of conference time with teachers and students, chiefly because of problems in scheduling. When students were available during school hours, places for conferences often were not; and, though students were generally eager to discuss their work in after-school meetings with the corrector, there often were other obligations which made the meeting impossible.

Because of the limited number of classes and teachers involved in the project at Concord, it was nearly impossible to set up a rigid system of controls. However, the first year at Concord appears to have been an outstanding success. The gains listed were the opportunity for more writing by students, more thorough correcting of papers, individual attention valuable to the students, extra time for the teacher to prepare lessons, greater interest in composition on the part of the students, more extensive reading by the students, and *better writing*. The Concord readers were qualified, cooperative, and dependable. The mechanics of the operation (the picking up and returning of papers, etc.) ran smoothly and satisfactorily.

A cross-section of students who participated in the project were given a questionnaire, in which three questions were of major interest to the Committee. Seventy-two students were questioned.

Did you do enough writing this year? Yes—63; No—0

Did you do more writing this year than last? Yes—49; No—10; About the same—4

Do you think your writing has improved this year? Yes—62; No—10

The students questioned approved Contract Correcting by approximately 15 to 1.

Fifty parents of students who participated in the project were asked to comment on Contract Correcting, and 41 returned the questionnaires. Of these 29 expressed approval of the plan and the desire that it continue. 3 expressed disapproval, and 9 gave no opinion. Of those expressing approval, the largest number gave as their reason the relief afforded the teacher, while others stated that the students' work had received more careful attention under the reader. The conferences between student and reader received unanimous approval, with the parents hoping that even more time would be available in the future.

A total of 626 impromptu themes were written by the students at the two schools, Newton High School and Concord High School. At Newton these were written on subjects designed by the teachers, and at Concord on subjects devised by Educational Testing Service. These papers were read three times with no knowledge of when they were written or by whom. Papers were numbered so that they could be paired.

In 1959-60, the third year of Contract Correcting, the project moved into a third community, Quincy, Massachusetts. The reasons for the addition of Quincy are several: (1) Quincy is a city of socio-economic structure different from that of either Newton or Concord; it is industrial and urban, whereas they are residential and suburban; (2) It is a polyethnic community experiencing pressures from a variety of national groups; (3) Its junior high school program in English was being revised, and a new course of study allowed room for experimentation; thus Contract Correcting could be tested in grades seven, eight, and nine.

When the project was announced for Quincy, 80 women applied. Of these, ten were selected for a workshop conducted by Dr. Sauer in August, 1959. From these ten, four were selected to work with four Quincy teachers.

Contract Correcting was continued at both Newton and Concord. Concord had four readers rather than two, the new ones paid by Concord. Newton had five readers rather than six; the Committee investigated whether or not a reader can do just twice the amount of reading as previously. One reader, therefore, carried a double load. Reading and conference hours were the same at all three school systems.

On January 7, 1960, Dr. Sauer met with the other members of the

Committee on Contract Correcting. Those present were Miss Mary Lanigan, acting Head of the English Department at Newton High School, Mr. W. Harold O'Connor, Head of the English Department at Concord High School, Mr. Herschel Billingsley, Educational Consultant for the Quincy schools, Dr. John Carroll of Harvard who has defined the testing program for the project, and Dr. Paul M. Ford, Dr. Sauer's assistant. Dr. Sauer asked the three representatives of the public schools involved in the project to comment on the merits and failings of the project to date.

The representative from Newton indicated that readers who had been involved in the project during the past year had become increasingly proficient in correcting student themes and thus quite acceptable to the teachers whom they served. Teachers, freed from the routine of grading papers, had more time for conferences with their students and more time to help younger teachers plan lessons. In September of 1959 the Committee assigned an inexperienced reader to a teacher who was new to the Newton schools. The purpose of this was to gain information regarding the relative efficiency of the arrangement. The representative from Newton said the relationship between this teacher and reader progressed slowly and that a new teacher generally does not have time to train a new reader.

The representative from Concord told the Committee that the project had worked so well in Concord during 1958-59 that the town agreed to pay for two extra readers for 1959-60. Although these readers did not come under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Contract Correcting, they agreed to provide the Committee with information relevant to their duties this year. The Head of the English Department at Concord also stated that conference time between reader and student, teacher and student had increased greatly during the past six months. He made the point that students were now receiving almost double the attention that they had received previous to the establishment of the project at Concord.

It was reported that the project in Quincy's junior high schools had run effectively except where cases of illness of readers had interfered. The students were writing more than they had in the past, and they seemed to be writing more effectively. The representative from Quincy suggested that the Committee, after the spring testing program was completed, would be able to gather statistics to establish whether Contract Correcting tended to improve student writing more in the junior high school or in the senior high school.

On May 18, 1960, the Director of the project met with readers and teachers from Newton High School. The teachers and readers agreed that when a Contract Correcting Project is to be extended within a

community for two years or more, care should be taken to keep teacher-reader teams together; that while a trained reader is capable of reading for any teacher, efficiency is greatest where teacher-reader teams are not broken up. In general, teachers at Newton High School felt that because of the relief provided them through the availability of lay readers, they had a great deal more time than they had had previously to study and introduce new materials into the classroom.

On May 18, 1960, Dr. Sauer met with the readers and teachers of Concord High School. The teachers and readers felt that the 200 hours allotted to readers at Concord were insufficient; 250 hours, they said, would be a more useful figure. They stated also that students seem to respond to criticism of their writing when this criticism is offered by both the teacher and reader. Teacher-made criticism is considerably reinforced when the reader, in her conference with a student, makes the same criticism.

When Dr. Sauer met with the teachers and readers involved in Contract Correcting in the Quincy junior high schools, the discussion closely paralleled those at Concord and Newton. The teachers and readers were well-pleased with the project.

The city of Newton now assumes the financial support of Contract Correcting, the use of six readers, in its high school. Concord also supports Contract Correcting and will use one reader for each teacher of English in its high school. Already both Newton and Concord have found Contract Correcting so useful that they are unwilling that a number of their teachers be without readers, unwilling that their students be without the attention which a reader can give them.

CHAPTER THREE

Readers and Teachers

During each year of the project the teachers and readers were continually encouraged to evaluate and to criticize any part of the project which they found unsatisfactory. Near the end of each year every teacher and every reader filled out a detailed questionnaire requesting information ranging from the personality compatibility of the teacher and reader to the efficiency of the organizational details of the project (such as the picking up and delivering of papers). For the fullness of the record in the first year of the program, the remarks of the six Newton teachers who participated in 1967-68 are given below without editorial revision.

The Teacher Questionnaire

1. Please describe and evaluate your reader with respect to knowledge of job, accuracy, cooperation and dependability.

   Teacher A: My reader was superior on these points. In addition, because her husband was a teaching fellow at Harvard, she saw freshman writing and could comment all the better to college preparatory pupils. Too, she was informed and interested in education as a whole. Because she was so fine, my experience has been a pleasant one.

   Teacher B: Reader was dependable, cooperative, fairly accurate, but a bit weak on punctuation. She tended to over-correct at times.

   Teacher C: Reader was cooperative but occasionally showed some lack of accuracy.

   Teacher D: Reader was cooperative, dependable and constantly improved in accuracy. Should learn to write more helpful comments.

   Teacher E: Reader tended to be a proof reader and not teach by correction; tended to be over-meticulous.

   Teacher F: Reader was extremely cooperative and dependable. Had good grasp of both mechanics and style.

2. How effectively did the reader operate in each of the following activities: (a) total evaluation of the paper (including grade); (b) annotation of mechanical errors only; (c) student conferences?

(a) *Teacher A:* She was accurate in her correction and could suggest improvement needed. She had a hesitancy about marking at either extreme of the scale.

Teacher B: The reader was never quite able to approximate the standards of the teacher.
Teacher C: Teacher still felt she should review the papers at the end of the year.
Teacher D: General agreement between teacher and writer evaluation was reached, but the teacher continued to review the papers.
Teacher E: Reader's grading was generally too severe. Teacher felt she must review the harsh comments made by the reader.
Teacher F: Reader became competent at over-all judgment.

(b) *Teacher A:* Reader was definite and accurate.
Teacher B: Reader was inclined to be too pedantic in mechanical errors.
Teacher C: Reader was highly proficient.
Teacher D: Reader missed many errors at first and was weak on spelling.
Teacher E: Reader's annotation showed little sense of teaching.
Teacher F: Reader did well in this area.

(c) *Teacher A:* In her conferences she was definite and constructive, friendly and dignified.
Teacher B: Reader was too timid, did not show enough initiative.
Teacher C: Reader held two or three conferences but the effectiveness was reduced because some students did not always keep their appointments.
Teacher D: Reader held two conferences with each student. These conferences seemed highly successful and the reader established a rapport with the students.
Teacher E: The reader held one set of conferences, but discontinued others near the end of the year.
Teacher F: The conferences were extremely valuable.

5. Did the reader save you measurable time in correcting? conferences?
Teacher A: Yes, particularly during the last weeks. To gain time to perform other department services, I asked for an increased amount of assistance. Probably I could have done only one-tenth or one-fourth of the conference work which she did.
Teacher B: No. A greater saving of time would be possible for the teacher if the correcting were used in non-college preparatory classes.
Teacher C: Some saving of time was possible at the end of the year.
Teacher D: Yes. Time was saved in both correcting and conferences, especially at the end of the year.
Teacher E: No. The reader's work had to be reviewed by the teacher.
Teacher F: The teacher had to review the papers but would not have had the time for conferences which the reader made possible.

6. Did the use of the reader make it possible for you to assign additional themes?
Only two teachers answered affirmatively here, though several answered that they were able to make writing assignments longer as a result of using the reader.
In this connection it is interesting to note a seeming discrepancy between teacher and student answers. Almost 75% of the students questioned stated that they did more writing this year than ever before.

This, of course, may have been due to their being in a higher grade level.

Ms. To those questions dealing with savings in time so that teachers could devote attention to professional growth and planning, only two again were able to observe any gain, though two others specified that such savings of time might be possible next year, now that the readers are trained.

7. Did the reader interfere in any way with your relationship with your students?

All: No.

Two of the teachers stated that discussing students and sharing views with the reader illuminated the teacher-student relationship.

8. What sort of information or assistance did the reader need from you? Did you find it possible to schedule adequate time to give her this help?

Teacher A: Needed more time to discuss the objectives of each assignment.

Teacher B: Reader needed help with the details of mechanics.

Teacher C: Reader needed guidance in the purpose of correction, the needs of the students, and introduction to the total course of study.

Teacher D: Reader needed instruction in how to make her comments more helpful and information on the general ability of the students.

Teacher E: Reader needed guidance in making helpful comments, and increasing her accuracy and spelling proficiency.

Teacher F: Reader needed explanation on the purpose of assignments. Arranging a schedule of student conferences took a large amount of the teacher's time.

9. Did the reader demand too much of your time? Did this occur only at the beginning of the project or did it continue through the year?

Teacher A: She demanded very little, but we would have liked more time to confer with one another.

Teacher B: (No response)

Teacher C: The reader required a large amount of time throughout the year.

Teacher D: The reader required more time than the teacher could make available, although the amount did decrease during the year. Delivery of the papers was also time-consuming.

Teacher E: The teacher was unable to give the reader nearly enough time.

Teacher F: The reader required a great deal of time, but the teacher enjoyed the reader's company.

10. With which curriculum and year did your reader work? Have you any suggestions to make regarding the appropriateness of using a reader in this curriculum and year or in any other curriculum and year?

Teacher A: I.A. Non-college would be a less critical area.

Teacher B: I.A. Reader would have been more helpful in a non-college preparatory class.

Teacher C: I.S. The reader would have been too impatient with another curriculum.

Teacher F: No. Time spent in conference with individual students in Curriculum I.

Teacher E: II.A. This was a good group to use with a corrector.
Teacher F: II.3. Correctors will be most effective with Curriculum II.

11. Do you feel that the reader had an adequate amount of conference time with your students? with you?
Teacher A: Enough with the students; not enough with me.
Teacher B: More time should be scheduled for conferences, and they should follow closely the return of papers.
Teacher C: No.
Teacher D: It would be more efficient for the reader to work with two groups at the same level.
Teacher E: No.
Teacher F: No. Time spent in conference with individual students is the best part of the program.

12. What do you feel is the purpose of the visits made by the reader to class sessions? In what ways do you feel that these visits were valuable to the reader — to pupils — to you?
Teacher A: Better understanding of the material, standards and pupils.
Teacher B: The visits were most valuable for the reader, because they acquainted the reader with the students, the class level, and the assignment.
Teacher C: The visits helped the reader to connect the student with his work, and familiarized the reader with the assignment.
Teacher D: The reader visited class ten times and gained an understanding of which aspects of the work the teacher was emphasizing.
Teacher E: The reader visited the class once, would have learned more about the students and the assignment by more frequent visits.
Teacher F: The visits help the reader get the feel of the class and helps the students associate the reader and the class.

13. Do you feel that the reader is more helpful with some kinds of writing than with others? Please specify.
Teacher A: Best with long compositions and the research paper.
Teacher B: The reader was best with expository writing. In creative writing, the reader tended to allow too much "soap opera."
Teacher C: The reader was excellent on all types.
Teacher D: The reader was best with objective and mechanical exercises, less successful in evaluating content.
Teacher E: The reader was very helpful with the research paper. She lacked understanding of organization, illustration.
Teacher F: The reader has had to develop familiarity with certain types of writing, like the precis.

14. During the first year of the experiment would you have preferred more meetings to discuss problems of the project — with other teachers only — with teachers and readers — with teachers, readers, and members of the Committee? Would you have preferred these meetings to be held on a regularly scheduled basis? Do you anticipate the need for regularly scheduled meetings next year?
Teacher A: Teachers should have been better informed at the outset.
Teacher B: Such meetings would have been helpful to the readers, but not the teachers.
Teacher C: The teacher-reader relationship was the heart of the

program, and more general meetings were not needed. However, the teachers should have been consulted on more of the decisions.

Teacher D: Meetings of teachers and readers as a group are not necessary. However, the teachers as a group should formulate proposals for next year. Some aspects of the program are too rigid, and others are too indefinite.

Teacher E: There should be more group meetings, a closer check-up on the program, and more reminders to the teachers. Regular bi-monthly meetings of teachers and readers would be most helpful.

Teacher F: General meetings are not desirable, but time for more conferences with the reader should be allowed for in the teacher's schedule.

The Reader Questionnaire

The readers who served the six teachers above were also asked to comment thoroughly on the project. Except in a few cases, responses are summarized here rather than given individually. A few questions related to mechanical details of payment of readers and clerical arrangements have been omitted from this summary.

1. What would you suggest as preparation for the work of contract correcting? In what ways might you have been better prepared?
   Most of the readers felt that the workshop had been very helpful. However, they felt that it should include or be supplemented by:
   1. Practice in the actual correction of student themes.
   2. Earlier introduction to the cooperating teacher and her standards, as well as the texts used by the teacher.
   3. Instruction in the purpose and conduct of student conferences.
   4. Introduction to the organizational set-up and procedures at Newton.
   5. Some background on the students as individuals and as classes.
   6. A thorough review of English grammar.
   7. Some outline of the plan of study for the coming year.
2. What kind of past experience (excluding the Workshop) helped you most in reading the papers?
   Answers included teaching experience, English composition courses, editorial work, counselling experience, and college English courses.
3. What personality traits would you look for in the selection of readers?
   Answers were varied, including everything from a desirable personality (adaptability, maturity, sense of humor, etc.) to intelligence and specific skills.
4. What kind of assistance from the teacher do you feel you needed for the work? Did you receive all the assistance you needed?
   Types of assistance desired were:
   1. Information about the nature and purpose of each assignment.
   2. Information about the students and the class.
   3. Mutual discussion of the reader's work with the teacher.

   Two of the readers felt they received enough assistance. Four felt that the teacher did not have the necessary time to give.

5. Would you spell out further your answer to question four by commenting on when you were in greatest need of assistance and how much time the teacher was able to give.
   Most of the readers felt they needed extra help at the beginning of the year. Some needed continued guidance with each set of papers. The teachers were able to give varied amounts of time during the year, ranging from a free period to telephone conversations. The readers were about evenly divided between those who felt they had received adequate attention and those who were extremely dissatisfied.
6. Do you think you could have done just as well in reading the papers if you had had less supervision?
   Three readers said "no," one said she had had no supervision at all, and two felt that it was helpful and should be increased.
7. Do you feel qualified to place a grade on the paper now? At what point in correcting experience did you first feel so qualified?
   All the readers felt they were competent to grade papers after some initial experience of a month or two. However, they qualified their statements by saying that they needed a clear idea of the assignment and occasional supervision by the teacher.
8. How often did you visit class? Was this often enough? Were these visits helpful to you? Why?
   Frequency of class visits ranged from twice during the year to ten visits, with the average at three. Most of the readers felt that the visits were highly desirable and expressed the wish that they had time to go more often. Readers felt that the visits helped them understand the assignments, the students, the teacher's methods, and the need for conferences.
9. Did you have enough conference time to discuss writing assignments with teachers? Would more of such conference time have helped you to do a better job?
   Most of the readers expressed a desire for more conference time, if it could be fitted into the teachers' and readers' schedules.
10. Would more frequent meetings with other readers have been of value to you? Should such meetings be held on a regularly scheduled basis?
    All the readers felt that occasional meetings would be helpful, especially for new readers, in clarifying organizational details and boosting morale.
11. Do you think that the conferences with students were helpful to them?
    In general, the conferences seemed to be followed by improvement in the students' work, as they previously had not understood their errors. However, the poorer students showed little interest in the conferences and little improvement during the year.
12. Were the conferences with students helpful to you? Can you suggest ways to improve the conference system?
    The readers felt the conferences helped them to know and understand the students, and increased the interest of both student and reader. However, the difficulty of scheduling conferences, the inconvenience to the reader, and negligible effects in many cases were pointed out. Some of the readers felt a need for closer cooperation between reader

and teacher in supplying background and sharing insights in connection with the conferences.

13. For which year and curriculum did you correct compositions? What kinds of writing assignments produced the best results for this year and curriculum?
The answers to this question varied with the individual readers, and there seems to be no basis for generalization.

14. Was the flow of papers to you frequent? regular? If irregular, were you inconvenienced by this fact?
Three readers said that the flow of papers was quite irregular, and inconvenienced them greatly. The other three either received papers regularly or did not mind the irregularity.

15. Write a brief evaluation of the project as you have seen it in operation. Would you recommend extension of it to other communities other than Newton?
Most of the readers expressed qualified approval for the project, despite complaints about its operation in the first year. They felt that its success depended upon the relationship established between the teacher and reader. Some felt that the benefits from the project would be greater in a smaller school with a less crowded schedule and more student-teacher contact. One reader felt that the project was acceptable only on a stop-gap basis. All felt the need for a more positive psychological orientation on the part of the teachers.

The second year of the project produced far more enthusiasm on the part of the readers and teachers than the first. Responsibility was more clearly defined, and the operational details of the high school were more clearly understood by the readers. Here is a statement from one of the Newton teachers written on June 21, 1959.

> Viewed from my own experiences this year, the contract correcting program has worked out very well. Miss—— worked largely with a II division, with some correcting (an increasing amount) done with a I,3 (college prep. Juniors) and a I,4 (College prep. seniors) division . . . In every case Miss—— has demonstrated increased growth as a corrector. The papers that I reread, I read largely for purposes of keeping abreast of what my students were doing (I actually changed very few of Miss——'s grades and when the occasion arose, I had no hesitation *in handing back sets of papers without any rereading on my part.*
>
> I feel that this has been a profitable year for both Miss—— and me, and I look forward to continuing on the same basis in the coming year.

Here is the statement of a teacher participating in the program for the first time during the past year; that is, he had not been served by a reader in 1957-58.

> Quite surprisingly and most fortunately my corrector, as a result of earlier editing experience, demonstrated early a good background plus a rapidity of learning. This combination of potentials greatly reduced the time needed for explanation in how to grade themes. Happily, also, my corrector added to her careful citing of composition errors and fairness in grading many helpful comments for the pupil. In my opinion these

remarks did as much good as the pointing out of errors. Thus my year proved altogether profitable.

I found, however, that my assistant afforded me time for making more theme assignments. It seemed that, for some unearthly reason, in seven years at Newton I had become so accustomed to the paper load that I continued to carry batches of themes home. The failure to use the time for work in lesson preparation and further study was entirely mine. This experience reveals the caution teachers of English must take to extract themselves from the "rut" once a means of escape has been offered.

Readers who had worked in both years of the project at Newton were questioned about the effect of reading for a number of the teacher's classes in order to provide a greater amount of teacher relief. The comment of one reader follows:

The second year of Contract Correcting was more successful than the first. Improvements ranged from better teacher attitude to increased productivity. The freedom to use more than one class gave Mr.—— the opportunity to assign more written work to a greater number and to get correcting relief wherever and whenever the load was heaviest. I benefited, too, by getting a more regular supply of work. The papers from Curriculum I Sophomores and Curriculum II Seniors, with the exception of one Curriculum I Senior set, were shorter and of a less literary nature than those of last year's Curriculum I Seniors. I therefore was able to cut my reading time in half and correct 26 sets of papers instead of the 15 last year. The extra allotment of hours was advantageous for correcting but not fully usable for student conferences. The fault was one of timing. Many Curriculum II Seniors had jobs after school and could not come for conferences then. Mr.—— could not find unoccupied rooms to use for their free periods; therefore we discontinued their conferences after they had used only 7½ hours. The sophomores came faithfully 41 ¾ after-school hours, but with department days and other activities, they, too, would have preferred in-school conference time. The advantages of the longer and more frequent appointments were so obvious that I wish the privilege could have been accorded to all who needed it. I wish, too, that I could have seen both classes in session. With these conditions fulfilled I could honestly say that this year's activities were completely successful.

The first year at Concord was an unqualified success. The entire questionnaire of one teacher and one reader are reproduced in full.

CONTRACT CORRECTING QUESTIONNAIRES

For Teachers

These are the questions we need to have answered in order to do an evaluation of the first year of Contract Correcting at Concord. If you need additional space, please use extra pages. Thank you. The Committee

1. Please describe and evaluate your reader with respect to knowledge of job, accuracy, cooperation, and dependabilty.

   I consider Mrs.—— excellent in every way. She contributed unstintingly in correcting time, conferences, discussions with me, and every

other way possible. She knew her job exceptionally well and was thorough and dependable beyond expectations.

2. How effectively does the reader operate in each of the following activities: (a) total evaluation of paper (including grade); (b) annotation and mechanical errors only; (c) student conferences?
   She has been doing an outstanding job in evaluating papers. She has not been stressing mechanical errors too much. She has had excellent relationships with pupils during conferences.
3. Did the reader save you measurable time in correcting? Conferences?
   She gave more than the time for which she was paid. She even volunteered to take on correcting after she had completed the hours allotted for her work.
4. Did the use of a reader make it possible for you to assign additional themes?
   It did not make much more written work possible since I have always given much. It did make more thorough analysis of papers possible.
5. As a result of having a reader for some of your papers, did you have extra time for any activity which may be thought of as contributing to your professional growth? Do you think you are likely to have such time next year?
   Her assistance gave me more time to prepare work for accelerated classes. It also gave me more time for student conferences.
6. Did you have additional time for planning lessons and developing teaching materials?
   Yes, I did.
7. Did the reader interfere in any way with your relationship with your students?
   I found no evidence of interference in any way.
8. What sort of information or assistance did the reader need from you? Did you find it possible to schedule adequate time to give her this help?
   In the beginning I spent a few hours going over my grading system with her. Once that preliminary work was over she was able to go on with very little help from me. I was able to schedule adequate time because of her cooperativeness.
9. Did the reader demand too much of your time? Did this occur only at the beginning of the project or did it continue through the year?
   I did not have the slightest feeling that she was requiring too much of my time.
10. With which curriculum and year did your reader work? Have you any suggestions to make regarding the appropriateness of using a reader in this curriculum and year or in any other curriculum and year?
    We worked mainly with a junior college preparatory group of only average ability. I did use her with a college preparatory senior group and occasionally with a non-college group.
11. Do you feel that the reader had an adequate amount of conference time with your students? with you?
    I believe that both types of conference time were adequate.
12. What do you feel is the purpose of the visits made by the reader to class sessions? In what ways do you feel that these visits were valuable to the reader—to pupils—to you?

1. She was able to listen to assignments of written work.
2. She was able to hear student questions about assignments.
3. She was able to hold some student conferences which would have been difficult to schedule at other times.

13. Do you feel that the reader is more helpful with some kinds of writing than with others? Please specify.
    I was well satisfied with her work with both student themes and outside reading reports.
14. Did the use of a reader unduly delay the return of papers to students?
    I do not think this was true to any great extent. The delay would have had to be even greater if I had corrected all papers myself.
15. Were organizational details of the project (such as picking up and delivering papers) satisfactory?
    She frequently came to the school or to my home to get papers to be graded. I felt that she went out of her way to be cooperative in this respect.
16. Please make any additional comment which you feel will be helpful to an evaluation of the project.
    I believe it would be a mistake to judge the merits of this plan too severely on the basis of pupil writing improvement over one or two years. Its merits as an aid to the teacher are worthy of serious consideration.
17. Please make any additional comment which you feel will be helpful to the continuance of the project next year.
    I am very enthusiastic about the plan. I have urged the hiring of contract correctors by our own school department to give other English teachers here the same type of assistance.
18. How do you feel about having a contract corrector read your papers another year? Would you specify how you would use the contract corrector to the greatest advantage?
    I am urging the continuance of this service and even advocating the use of additional contract correctors to be paid by our school department.
    I hope to continue to use the contract correctors in the same way that I did this year.

CONTRACT CORRECTING QUESTIONNAIRE

For Readers

These are the questions we need to have answered in order to do an evaluation of the first year of Contract Correcting. If you need additional space, please use extra paper. Thank you. The Committee

1. What would you suggest as preparation for the work of contract correcting? In what ways might you have been better prepared?
   A good English background, and teaching or editorial experience. Some experience with high school students would be helpful (church work or scouting if not teaching). I lacked any previous contact with students of high school age although I had worked with college students.

2. What kind of past experience (excluding the Workshop) helped you most in reading the papers?

   My college courses in English for factual information, the extensive reading required for my master's degree for evaluation of book reports, correcting English themes in college as part of a course in Methods of Teaching English, six years of editorial experience which included the preparation and editing of technical papers and manuals and the handling of extensive correspondence as part of my secretarial job. The latter experience developed the ability to read critically. College courses in writing provided experience with problems encountered in written English.

3. What personality traits would you look for in the selection of readers?

   Willingness to cooperate, understanding of students of high school age, adaptability and flexibility. Teacher and corrector must work out differences of opinion so that students will not be confused. The corrector must fit into an existing school system, she must be tactful about making suggestions, and she should allow the teacher's opinion to carry the greater weight since his is the final responsibility.

4. What kind of assistance from the teacher do you feel you needed for the work? Did you receive all the assistance you needed?

   Some knowledge of what the students have been taught in the way of grammar and writing techniques, the kinds of assignments and exactly what is expected for each kind, the grading system. Yes. Mr.—— in an initial conference discussed what had been taught, grading, assignments. He gave me as much information as possible for each assignment and was more than willing to answer questions. With the first set of papers he gave me papers he had corrected ranging from A to F to let me know what he expected.

5. Would you spell out further your answer to question four by commenting on when you were in greatest need of assistance and how much time the teacher was able to give.

   Before I started to work I felt that I needed to know more about the school system and the kind of students with whom I would be dealing. Mr.—— gave up a free period to talk with me. We held conferences after each set of student conferences, sometimes lasting two hours, discussing the students and their work. I picked up and returned papers at school and tried to ask my questions at this time. Whenever I felt the need of a longer discussion he was more than willing to arrange it after school, at night or during school vacations.

6. Do you think you could have done just as well in reading the papers if you had had less supervision?

   Mr.—— never gave the impression that he was supervising me. In fact, I did not know until late in the school year how much supervision he had done. He did let me know from time to time that he was pleased with the way the program was progressing and did report any evidence of satisfaction from students, parents or administrators.

7. Do you now feel qualified to place a grade on the paper? At what point in the correcting experience did you first feel so qualified?

   Yes, for Mr.——' classes or students of my own if I were teaching. With another teacher I would expect to spend some time in discussion

and correcting before I felt qualified. After the first set of conferences when the students had completed three papers. During the conferences I had to explain and justify my grades and corrections. When I realized that the students accepted my explanations, I felt more confident.

6. How often did you visit class? Was this often enough? Were these visits helpful to you? Why?

6-12 times. It is difficult to say exactly because I often conferred with students during class and remained for the balance of the period. The visits were extremely helpful since I was able to observe the students and see how they reacted in class. Their performances gave me clues to some of their difficulties. I feel they accepted me more readily since they were accustomed to seeing me in class or talking with their instructor. Watching the teacher gave me a great many pointers on handling the students and helped me to realize what he expected of them and his teaching methods.

9. Did you have enough conference time to discuss writing assignments with teachers? Would more of such conference time have helped you to do a better job?

I had all the conference time I requested. I feel that conferences between corrector and teacher are essential. There are bound to be some differences of opinion. We discussed them and arrived at an agreement before the papers were returned so that the students were never aware of any divergence and could feel more secure. We found the exchange of information invaluable—he pointed out things for me to watch for and I supplied him with material gained in conference. All of us benefited, the students most of all.

10. Do you think that the conferences with students were helpful to them?

Extremely so. They went out of their way to tell me that they felt them to be valuable. We used the conferences for remedial purposes so that class time was not taken up for the benefit of a few. They asked for conferences when they needed help and many of them did outside assignments willingly to clear up troublesome problems. I placed a sign-up sheet on their class bulletin board where they could make appointments for special conferences. Some of them came every week until the matter was cleared up.

11. Were the conferences with students helpful to you? Can you suggest ways to improve the conference system?

Yes. The errors are apparent in reading the papers; we tried to discover the reasons which were often personal rather than factual. Some errors were corrected merely through discussion. The more preliminary work the corrector does, the more complete her information, the more successful the conference. I kept records, reread papers and made notes before conferences. The student should be allowed to ask questions and get help. It is impossible to do all this in one conference without preparation.

12. For which year and curriculum did you correct compositions? What kinds of writing assignments produced the best results for this year and curriculum?

Principally for 1 Junior and 1 Senior College English class. Occasion-

ally 1 Senior Honors Class and 1 Junior class in Civic English. Book reports showed the greatest improvement. The informal essay on topics within their range of interest and themes which allowed them to express an opinion were done successfully. The poorest job was done on themes on abstract topics such as freedom or democracy.

13. Did the job require too many tasks that you were not paid for?
No. Most of the extra tasks I performed involved reading or talking with English teachers or professors in an effort to prepare myself thoroughly for my job. Later on I performed small services for the students, answering questions, suggesting books, occasionally looking up information—nothing that a teacher would not be expected to do without additional compensation.

14. Write a brief evaluation of the project as you have seen it in operation. Would you recommend extension of it to other communities?
I would certainly recommend its extension to other communities. I believe in it so completely that I would like to see it become an accepted part of school systems. I think that a great deal of necessary remedial work can be provided through this program by a competent corrector to the advantage of all the students thereby lightening the teacher's burden. Remedial reading in many school systems is the responsibility of one person in the school, often one in a school system. I think the same thing can be done with writing. Bright students will not be held back, and the slower ones will get the additional work they need. The teacher would not have to interrupt his schedule to teach a lesson applicable only to a few.
I think any community willing and able to pay for it would find the program of inestimable value.

The teachers and readers at Concord and Newton High Schools and Quincy Junior High School were again asked in 1960 to "comment on their experience as participants in the Contract Correcting Project during the past year." The answers to the questionnaires dealt with the success of the project, its failings, and suggestions for improving its operation.

At Concord High School teachers and readers were extremely pleased with the improvements in student composition, the relationships among readers, teachers, and students, and the general improvement of student attitude toward writing. Although four readers were serving at Concord, only two were responsible to SUPRAD. The other two were hired directly by Concord because of the success of the program the previous year. The students who seem to have improved the most were those who were involved in the program the previous year. "Some students produced 30 or 40 pages of thoughtful and critical writing . . . work which could have put many a college student to shame. Certain work in comparative essays also revealed awakening of thought and ability. Students with few mechanical difficulties or with unusual originality became interested in style. Conferences or comments on their papers brought forth

lively response." Because of the increased amount of attention to composition, the somewhat reluctant non-college bound students found that they too had a stake in the quality of composition. "Once they were convinced that they could get help merely by asking for it, the response was overwhelmingly enthusiastic." Teachers and readers were enthusiastic most about the increase of help to the individual student through conference periods.

At Newton High School teachers and readers in all cases but one expressed approval of the project. In this one case the teacher and reader were new to the project and experienced generally the same problems as all the teachers and readers in the first year. This would seem to indicate the importance of a two-to-three year incubation period before the full and successful operation of the project where both new readers and new teachers are concerned. However, where one member of the team has had some experience with Contract Correcting, this period is considerably shorter.

The teachers at Newton have remarked many interesting ideas that the readers have contributed to the teaching in the classroom. Moreover, many of the experienced readers have demonstrated fortuitous insight into the cause and nature of student error and in the timely scheduling and lively presentation of materials in conference periods. The teachers are quite confident of their readers' ability to assess their students' work fairly and accurately. Teachers cited their readers for the qualities of cooperation, dependability, resourcefulness, tact, and general intelligence and ability. All of the readers have demonstrated genuine interest in the students and their improvement. Many of the teachers held that the new thoroughness in the reading of papers was often sufficient encouragement for the students to produce better composition. There were virtually no complaints about the smoothness and efficiency of the mechanics of transporting and passing papers, while there was some dissatisfaction about the availability of time, place, and students for conferences.

The teachers were very pleased with the *relief* provided by the reader. The teachers found that they now had time for the imaginative preparation of assignments, collateral reading, other department assignments, and finally, *time for themselves*. One teacher even stated her belief "that the corrector can be more objective than the teacher in marking the student's work."

Two experiments within this year of the Newton program provided happy results. One reader who had been with the program from its beginning in 1957 was able to assume a double load of 500 correcting hours, 250 hours for two different teachers. One of the teachers had been served by a different reader the previous year, which had been

this teacher's first. Since all members of this experiment were familiar with all phases of the project, the reader was able to adjust quickly with the second teacher and handle successfully the additional load. The reader pointed out, however, that a regular scheduling and even flow of papers were essential to her performance. Some readers, therefore, can do an effective job under a greater load, if necessary.

Secondly, one reader was assigned to do emergency relief work for a teacher who had been ill. Both teachers and reader had been with the program previously. After a single hour "briefing" on the recent assignments, the reader was able to give grades and make comments with which the teacher was in complete agreement to four sets of papers by sophomores and juniors in two weeks. "The satisfactory outcome of this two-week arrangement indicates that roving assignments on a short-term basis are feasible if both the corrector and teachers are experienced with the program."

Some statements, taken at random from the comments of the teachers at Newton and Concord follow:

Teacher A: My experience in the Contract Correcting Project this year has been very satisfactory. Miss——, my corrector, has taken a genuine interest in the pupils and their improvement. There has been a real feeling of cooperation between us. Because of her assistance, I have spent many hours in pupil conferences that I could not otherwise have held, and I have had time for other department assignments.

Teacher B: Personally, I found the Program an immense help. Mrs.—— gave the papers far more careful scrutiny than I would have had time to give. Due largely to her perceptive comments and guidance, there was marked improvement in the students' writing during the course of the year. The Program also saved me a tremendous amount of time which I was able to devote to more careful class preparation. Thirdly, I think that the corrector can be more objective in marking the student's work.

Teacher C: The correlation between the grades assigned by Mrs.—— and those I would have given was exceptionally good, seldom varying more than the amount of a "plus" or a "minus." In addition, the effect on the students was good. They were impressed by the careful work spent on their compositions, work in many cases unparalleled in their previous years. The fact that two people were advocating certain aspects of school work, rather than one, impressed them.
The students wrote more than they would have. They had much more conference time. They were exposed to a few ideas that I would not have thought of. For example, Mrs.—— helped me develop a plan for student correction. This was carried out on an experimental basis, with considerable interest for the students.

Teacher D: I am so enthusiastic about the plan that I have found very little to criticize unfavorably. I believe this is due in part to the good fortune I have had in getting the corrector I did get. This emphasizes to me the importance of pairing teachers and correctors

who can collaborate well. I see no reason why the plan cannot be successful in any high school if the corrector and reader are carefully paired.

Teacher E: My students were, for the most part, very enthusiastic about having Mrs.—— read their papers and offer comments. Detailed comments lead pupils to believe that their own individual ideas and accomplishments are really important and therefore they tend to work even harder. This detailed attention is not possible on many papers without a corrector; consequently the program not only helps to improve writing, but it also serves as a motivation for better work and clearer thinking.

The responses of the teachers in being asked to comment this time on the program were distinguished by their thoroughness. A number of them were two pages long, showing a thoughtfulness growing out of experience in using lay readers. All served to underscore our basic assertion that the ability of the readers greatly improves with experience and that the program in a high school gets much better from year to year. Not too much is to be expected in the first months, as readers and teachers get adjusted to one another and as readers learn the policies of the school. But once the reader becomes familiar with the teacher's demands and gets to know the special writing problems of a group of students, the results are felt by students, teachers and readers alike.

Because 1959-60 was the first year of the project at Quincy, teachers and readers there were given a questionnaire similar to the one used at Newton and Concord at the end of the first year. To the question of the reader's ability, all four teachers queried found their readers well qualified, two teachers calling their readers "superior." Similarly all teachers found their readers competent in the evaluation of papers and in the annotation of them, but teachers felt that there was insufficient time for student conferences because of the school schedules. All teachers agreed that the reader had saved them time. One teacher wrote, "It would have taken me four times as long, for the reader did three sets of papers to my one." Three of the four said that the use of a reader had made it possible to assign more themes, but one said that she has always assigned considerable writing and that the amount did not increase appreciably. All four said that time saved had made it possible for them to spend additional hours in planning lessons and developing teaching materials. None said that the reader had interfered in any way with the teacher's relationship with students. The major kind of information or assistance needed by the reader had usually to do with specific assignments, and this, say the teachers, was accomplished with ease. No teacher said that a reader had demanded too much of her time. Three of the teachers thought their readers

about equally effective in reading all kinds of papers, but one thought her reader best with descriptions and actual experiences, least effective with writing based on literature, since this meant the reader had to be familiar with the selections and thus there was extra work for the reader.

None of the teachers saw any need for additional meetings with the Committee, though one thought that the teachers involved in the project might have occasional meetings to share ideas on the use of the reader and on the composition program in general. All four readers expressed themselves as wanting readers for the next year. One teacher wrote as follows:

> I would certainly appreciate having the services of the contract corrector another year. I feel the reader is most effective if she is familiar with the students as individuals. The personal conferences are very important in this respect. I would therefore devote more time to conference periods than we were able to schedule this year. In addition, I think the reader can be of great assistance to the teacher if she keeps a brief biographical chart listing the deficiencies and progress of each child. This service would provide a supplementary record for the teacher and enable her to determine lesson plans more accurately. Thus in addition to correcting the papers, I feel the reader's services can be used to greatest advantage through the conferences and supplementary information which she can provide.

The responses of the readers at Quincy were especially thoughtful, and detailed, as they tried to assess their accomplishments in this first year of the project on a junior high school level. All felt that the use of lay readers had been successful at Quincy and should be continued in the community. All claimed to notice significant improvement in the writing of students. The complete questionnaire of one of the readers follows:

CONTRACT CORRECTING QUESTIONNAIRE

For Readers

These are the questions we need to have answered in order to do an evaluation of the first year of Contract Correcting. If you need additional space, please use extra pages. Thank you.

The Committee

1. What would you suggest as preparation for the work of contract correcting? In what ways might you have been better prepared?
   The Workshop provided a fine introduction to contract correcting. Presumably the readers have some academic background; therefore, the only further instruction I can see necessary would be conferences with the individual teachers. Possibly the readers could be given a few sample papers with comments and grades to illustrate the criteria given at the Workshop and by the teacher.

2. What kind of past experience (excluding the Workshop) helped you most in reading the papers?
In this field as in so many others, wide reading is of great importance. I believe that it gives a good appreciation of style—something intangible but important. My teaching, even though it had been done at a lower level, provided experience in dealing with pupils.

3. What personality traits would you look for in the selection of readers?
Another intangible and a hard one to measure is the first quality I would list: a belief in the value of writing, in the "reciprocal relationship between writing and thinking." Without it the correcting of papers could become a mechanical thing. Initiative in suggesting ways to correct pupil difficulties is important, provided that it is coupled with tact in dealing with the teacher. Such other traits as punctuality, diligence, patience, and a keen eye are useful. (The reader must be able to maintain her own standards of writing against constant subtle subversion. I find that I must be very careful not to use the run-on sentence myself.)

4. What kind of assistance from the teacher do you feel you needed for the work? Did you receive all the assistance you needed?
and

5. Would you spell out further your answer to question four by commenting on when you were in greatest need of assistance and how much time the teacher was able to give.
At the beginning of the project my teacher introduced me briefly to her standards, said something of the makeup of the classes and of the literature they would read, and gave me a few sample papers to acquaint me with the sort of writing I would be reading. As the project continued and she gave me assignments, she explained their nature. All these aids were important.
The one form of assistance which I desired and did not receive was an evaluation of my work. I was feeling my way along while correcting the first one or two sets of papers, and the responsibility of grading weighed heavily. I would have appreciated a few comments, favorable and unfavorable, to use as guides in future correcting. I do not mean this as a criticism in any way of Miss——, for I thoroughly enjoyed working with her. I feel that she did not want to over-supervise or interfere.

6. Do you think you could have done just as well in reading the papers if you had had less supervision?
Miss—— was extremely careful not to supervise too much, as I have noted above. This was not a problem.

7. Do you now feel qualified to place a grade on the paper? At what point in the correcting experience did you first feel so qualified?
After about the first two or three sets of papers I felt that my grading was accurate. In the absence of any comments to the contrary from my teacher and because of the experience I have had, I do feel so qualified.

8. How often did you visit class? Was this often enough? Were these visits helpful to you? Why?
I never visited the class. Because I took the initiative in requesting conferences, I did not care to request visits also.

9. Did you have enough conference time to discuss writing assignments with teachers? Would more of such conference time have helped you to do a better job?
The amount of conference time was ample. In my last "bill" I included 5 hours of conference time for the entire project. I am sure that this is a low figure, but because it was an approximation I felt it better to underestimate the amount.

10. Would more frequent meetings with other readers have been of value to you? Should such meetings be held on a regularly scheduled basis?
Occasional meetings with other readers would have been valuable, although I doubt that these meetings would have to be on a regular schedule.

11. Do you think that the conferences with students were helpful to them?
I had only one conference with each student, but I felt that even this amount helped them. Further conferences to follow up mistakes and to note progress would be even more valuable, of course. A brief comment on a paper cannot hope to convey its strengths and weaknesses adequately, nor can general class discussions alone be pertinent enough. With but 2 or 3 exceptions all the students seemed to really enjoy the conferences.

12. Were the conferences with students helpful to you? Can you suggest ways to improve the conference system?
The conferences also were valuable to me. Meeting the various students gave me some insight into the ways in which they would react to criticism. Some could take a comparatively frank discussion of their papers; others, less mature or more sensitive, would require considerable finesse from me in any assessment of their work. I was aided also in making corrections more meaningful to the students, and I could appreciate the very real problems some pupils faced when they had to write.
My only suggestion would be more regularly scheduled conferences.

13. For which year and curriculum did you correct compositions? What kinds of writing assignments produced the best results for this year and curriculum?
Ninth grade, non-college students comprised my sections.
To take the reverse of the next question first, the assignment which produced the worst results was that which called for personal experiences or personal reactions. The pupils seemed to feel that there was no real need to develop any idea because the experience or feeling was already known to them and could be transferred to the paper with a sort of stream of consciousness technique. Concurrent with this lack of logical development was a deterioration in the mechanics of writing. Paragraphs, topic sentences vanished; run-on sentences or extremely short sentences and all kinds of grammatical errors appeared in even greater numbers. This kind of assignment is often quite helpful for the teacher to get to know and understand her pupils better. On this basis some of these assignments can probably be justified.
Better results seemed to be obtained from topics taken from the literature, topics which had been discussed in class. Although the pupils did not enjoy this sort of writing as much as that which has been previously discussed, they seemed to produce better papers. Writing on impersonal topics seemed to make it easier to concentrate on writing skills.
During my four months one creative writing assignment was given. The

classes were to create stories from pictures, and for the most part the results were creditable.

14. Was the flow of papers to you frequent? regular? If irregular, were you inconvenienced by this fact?
The flow of papers was irregular and, at the beginning, somewhat infrequent. Although I was not inconvenienced personally by this irregularity, I did find it difficult to use all the required hours.
15. Were the arrangements concerning such organizational details as scheduling of conferences and picking up and delivering papers satisfactory? Do you have any suggestions for improvement of the arrangements?
All such details were most satisfactory.
16. How could the research assistant have been of more help to you?
I can't think of anything more that he could have done.
17. Have you suggestions for making the record-keeping more efficient? Practical? accurate? Consider here Data Sheets, Time Records.
There has been a delightful lack of bureaucratic detail throughout the year. All details seemed to have been covered in a simple yet comprehensive manner.
18. Do you think you have been adequately paid?
Yes.
19. Did the job require too many tasks that you were not paid for?
No.
20. Can you suggest a more effective method of being paid?
No.
21. Write a brief evaluation of the project as you have seen it in operation. Would you recommend extension of it to other communities? Would it possibly be more adaptable to communities other than Quincy?
I would evaluate the program very highly. Even without any data for scientific evaluation the program seems to have obvious value for both teachers and pupils. It relieves the teacher of much of the burden of correcting and thereby encourages her to give more writing assignments. It is these writing assignments that form the keystone of the English curriculum, that develop "the reciprocal relationship . . ."
Logically the program should actually improve the pupils' writing ability. The increased opportunities to write coupled with the individual guidance given by the readers should produce recognizable gains in the writing. For this possibility to be realized, however, the readers should have ample opportunity to confer with the pupils. However logical it may seem, this second benefit will have to wait another year for verification.
If a community has top school personnel interested in improving education, not in merely maintaining it, and if it has enough able teachers willing to try innovations, then it could well benefit from the Contract Correcting Project. The community need not have a large college-destined school population. Indeed, the opposite group, the students whose education will be terminated at high school graduation, has great need of this sort of assistance. It is rather unlikely that these people will have any further exposure to formal thinking and writing; hence the need for maximum junior high and high school assistance.
To repeat my opening statement: I evaluate the program highly, and in addition, advocate its extension to many other communities.

CHAPTER FOUR

Student Impromptu Themes and Questionnaires

Newton Impromptu Themes: 1957-1958

In the early fall of 1957 and late spring of 1958 impromptu themes were written by all students participating in the Contract Correcting experiment at Newton High School. A total of twelve classes was involved. Four classes had been given extensive aid by a corrector; four classes were not directly involved with a corrector, but had teachers who were aided by a corrector in other classes; four classes had teachers who were not aided at all by a corrector.

The topics for the themes were based on Educational Testing Service writing assignments 11.1 and 12.2 which were of such a nature that they could be written on twice, thus producing "comparable themes." The dependent variable was the difference between scores achieved in the fall and the spring. The themes were marked by two Educational Testing Service readers. The readers were asked to judge the themes by the same standards as applied to themes submitted by high school students as part of the Composition Test of the College Entrance Examination Board; the themes were ranked on a nine point scale, 1 being low and 9 high.

All information as to when the papers were written and by whom was removed. The papers were numbered in such a way that the Committee would know when and by whom a paper had been written, but the Educational Testing Service readers would have no such information to prejudice them. After the papers had been graded, they were paired and the results, together with prerequisite biographical information, were punched into IBM cards.

For the most part the comparison of impromptu themes written at Newton in the fall and those written in the spring proved somewhat disappointing in the first year. Of the four classes which were given extensive attention by a corrector, only one showed any significant improvement in writing skills; this was a high intelligence, college bound group of juniors. Of the four classes which had no direct assistance from a corrector, but whose teacher was aided in another class by the corrector, one group showed significant gains; this was a junior group of above average intelligence. Although these eight classes were

exposed to a corrector's influence, either through her direct and personal instruction or through her work in relieving a teacher of some of the burden of reading papers, only two of them appeared to profit to any real extent from the relationship.

Of the four classes which were not aided at all by a corrector, two groups showed writing gains; both groups were juniors, one of high and one of better than average intelligence. It is noteworthy that in all three groups—those directly aided, indirectly aided, and not aided—the senior groups consistently showed the lowest gain scores.

The low scores by so many groups in the experiment led to a search for an explanation outside the Contract Correcting experiment. The one that occurred immediately (suggested by explicit comments of exasperation as well as test-weariness expressed in papers) was that the spring impromptu themes were given much too late in the school year; students had been deluged with tests, and seniors, most of whom had received college acceptances, had stopped working. It will be remembered from the preceding paragraph that the only groups which showed no losses in the impromptu theme test scores were composed of *juniors* whose high school academic work was not finished.

It was assumed by the Committee on Contract Correcting that college preparatory seniors of the highest intelligence, tested late in the spring, had lost their ambition to write well. This would be a natural consequence of the college acceptances; late spring would become a period in which to "slack off." College preparatory students of lesser intelligence than the top groups would probably have received their acceptances or at least would be assured of graduating; they too would tend to be poorly motivated.

The inconsistencies which appeared in the test results could thus, to some degree at least, be attributed to the test design itself, which had failed to take into account a typical pattern of student behavior. It was decided that impromptu themes in the 1958-59 testing program would be written earlier in the spring.

The Committee did not feel that the results of the 1957-58 testing program were conclusive in any way. In neither the Contract Correcting groups nor in the control groups were the gains and losses consistent, and though no substantial gains could be reported with the Contract Correcting groups, neither were the losses critical. Writing gains made by students ranged from one to six points, while losses ranged from one to four points on the nine point scale. If Contract Correcting did not help students to write better in the first year at Newton, it was not detrimental to student writing. The table below compares the impromptu theme results in the fall with those written in the spring.

TABLE 1

Newton High School Impromptu Themes, 1957-1958

Group	Grade	No. of paired themes in class	Spring scores: Gained	Even	Lost	Percent of class who gained in spring
(1)	12*	29	8	6	15	28%
(2)	12*	28	9	7	12	32%
(3)	12*	30	6	5	19	20%
(1)	12**	24	5	3	16	21%
(2)	12**	30	3	10	17	10%
(3)	12**	26	9	5	12	35%
(1)	11*	27	14	6	7	52%
(2)	11*	25	9	7	9	36%
(3)	11*	20	10	3	7	50%
(1)	11**	31	12	6	13	39%
(2)	11**	36	21	2	13	58%
(3)	11**	37	17	7	13	46%

Key to symbols used in table:

(1) experimental group whose themes were read by a corrector
(2) control group whose themes were read by a teacher who was served in other classes by a corrector
(3) control group whose teacher had no corrector
* college bound students of highest intelligence
** college bound students

Newton Student Questionnaires: 1957-1958

In the spring of 1958 the six teachers whose students were involved in the experiment distributed to every fourth student a questionnaire which had been prepared by the Committee. These students were neither permitted to fill out the questionnaires in class nor compelled to complete and return them. The Committee was interested in seeing how many students of their own volition would return the questionnaires.

Of the sixty-odd questionnaires distributed, thirty were returned. The results were interesting but not always conclusive. There was considerable inconsistency among the replies from the individual classes, and very few generalizations are possible. The questionnaire, together with a summary of the students' responses, is given below.

1. Do you think you did enough writing this year?
   Fourteen answered "yes".
   Thirteen answered "no".
   Three students did not answer.
   Did you do more than in previous years?
   Twenty-four answered "yes".
   Six answered "no".
2. Do you feel that your writing has improved this year?
   All students felt that their writing had improved.

If so, to what extent do you think this might be due to any part of the Contract Correcting program?
Ten students did not know, or thought that the program was helpful.
Twenty students gave some credit to the program through conferences, or closer attention to their errors.

3. Did the work of the corrector in marking your papers make your writing of subsequent papers easier?
Fifteen students gave some type of affirmative response.

4. What differences, if any, did you notice between the papers corrected by the teacher and those done by the corrector?
Four students noted no difference.
Four students felt that the papers marked by the reader contained more comments and marking.
Four students said that there was a difference in the grade, the reader's grade being either higher or lower.
Four students said that the emphasis of the reader's marking was on mechanics, while the teacher's emphasis was on more general aspects.
One student said that the teacher's comments were more "valuable, precise, numerous and to the point."

5. Do you feel that there were any disadvantages in the use of a contract corrector in your class?
Eight students said that there were no disadvantages.
Three students said that the return of the papers was delayed.
Two students complained about conferences which were held in class time.
Four students complained about the lack of contact with the reader.
One student said that the program did not help the teacher and only created a lot of "red tape."

6. Do you think your papers were more effectively marked for particular kinds of assignments—that is, do you think that the reader corrected some kinds of papers better than others? Please specify.
Fifteen students reported that they saw no difference in the correction according to the type of assignment.
One student felt that short stories were more effectively marked.
One student felt that impromptu themes were more effectively marked.
One student felt that the type of correction varied with the teacher's emphasis, (an unclear answer).

7. Do you think contract correcting might work better in a grade or curriculum different from your own? which ones?
Three students answered "no" to the first part of the question.
One did not know, and three left the question blank.
Eleven students felt that the program would work well in any grade and curriculum.
Nine students felt that the program should be introduced before the senior year, even as early as junior high.
Two students felt that the program should be limited to curriculums I and II.
One student felt that the program should be limited to curriculums III and IV.

8. Do you think your papers were slower in being returned because of the reader?
   Thirteen students answered "no".
   Seventeen students answered "yes".
9. Were you satisfied with the symbols used in marking your papers? Were you always clear about the nature of an error from the way in which it was indicated?
   One student was dissatisfied, and one had no opinion.
   The remainder of the students felt that the symbols were familiar and generally clear, except for occasional instances.
10. In what ways were your conferences with the reader of practical value?
    Five students reported that they gained little or nothing from the conferences.
    The remaining students felt that the conferences had helped them to understand their errors and improve their writing.
    Do you feel that the number and spacing of conferences throughout the year was adequate?
    Twenty-three students felt that there were not enough conferences or that they were too short.
    One student felt that there were too many conferences.
    Six students felt that there were enough conferences.
    Do you have any suggestions for the improvement of the use of conference time?
    One student requested that the conferences be held during school hours.
    One student felt that the conference time should be devoted to rewriting.
    Two students wanted more positive suggestions on how to improve their writing.
    One student felt that the conference should be held more or less frequently according to the need of the student.
    One student thought that each conference should concentrate on one particular difficulty.
11. Are there any ways in which the reader might have been of more help to you?
    No definite comments.
12. Would you be satisfied to have your papers read by a corrector again (assuming that you were going to be in high school another year)? Please indicate why or why not.
    Four students answered "no", because there was no saving of time, no contact with reader, etc.
    Three students were uncertain.
    Twenty-three students said "yes", for reasons ranging from unusual improvement in their grades, to more specific help with their errors.

Newton Impromptu Themes: 1958-1959

While controls in the experiment were relaxed somewhat in 1958-59 at Newton, students who in any way were involved with a corrector were again asked to write impromptu themes. Topics for these themes were selected by the individual teachers involved in the project. They

were requested to choose topics of such a nature that they could be written on in the fall and spring without boring the students. The classes involved in the project were informed by their respective teachers that these themes would count just as would any other themes toward their term grade. This warning had not been issued previous to the tests of 1957-58.

The impromptu themes were written early in October and again during late March. The Committee hoped that the seniors, most of whom had not received college acceptances, would still be exerting their best efforts. To a certain degree at least the Committee's hypothesis that earlier spring themes would result in improved senior scores proved justified. A grading scale of 1 to 9 was used, and each paper was read three times.

The scorers felt that the unevenness of the topics selected by the individual teachers tended to obscure some composition skills. In one or two classes, where the topic or assignment seemed over-structured, higher-level writing skills such as logical development, paragraphing, and even sentence structure could scarcely make themselves apparent. The Committee decided to refrain from having teachers devise their own impromptu theme topics in future testing.

In virtually all of the papers, even in those with low scores, the reader found evidence of systematic instruction in composition. The most limited of the students demonstrated some sense of organization, a feeling for the theme as something structured and planned.

There were 208 complete pairs of themes from the groups involved in the project. Of the four classes aided by a corrector, three showed significantly higher gain scores than loss scores. There was no real difference in performance between the very best college preparatory classes and the other college preparatory classes. One junior class failed to show any significant gain, even though it was aided by a corrector. No reason for this failure was found by the Committee.

Of the four classes which had no direct aid from a corrector but whose teachers were aided in another class by a corrector, one showed some gains, while the other three neither gained nor lost to any real extent.

These test results seem to indicate not only that a corrector can relieve the teacher of the task of reading many sets of papers, but also that the corrector is of some value in helping students to become more effective writers. Students apparently did profit from increased writing assignments made possible by the availability of a corrector and from conferences between corrector and pupil.

Table 2 below offered some encouragement after the dismal test scores of 1957-58.

TABLE 2

Newton High School Themes, 1958-1959

Comparison between fall and spring scores

Group	*Grade*	*No. of paired themes in class*	*Spring scores:* *Gained*	*Even*	*Lost*	*Percent of class who gained in spring*
(1)	12*	28	15	6	7	53%
(2)	12*	25	10	5	10	40%
(1)	12**	24	13	4	7	54%
(2)	12**	26	10	9	7	38%
(1)	11*	28	16	4	8	57%
(2)	11*	27	9	9	9	33%
(1)	11**	26	10	6	10	38%
(2)	11**	24	5	8	11	21%

Key to symbols used in table:
(1) experimental group whose themes were read by a corrector
(2) control group whose themes were read by a teacher who was served in other classes by a corrector
* college bound students of highest intelligence
** college bound students

Concord Impromptu Themes, 1958-1959

During 1958-59 the town of Concord was included in the Contract Correcting project. The students who were involved in the project were tested in the fall and spring with the same writing assignments, set by the Educational Testing Service, which had been used in the previous year's testing in Newton. Because Concord High School was too small to provide enough classes of matched intelligence within one grade level to support a test design such as that used in Newton in 1957-58, the same rigid controls could not be set up.

Each of two teachers at Concord was assisted by a reader. The teachers were asked to use the lay reader for one class which was of matched intelligence with another class belonging to that teacher, but which would receive no aid from the lay reader. This procedure was used to test two groups of seniors and two groups of freshmen.

All classes showed gains in their spring scores; both the senior and freshman classes that were aided by a corrector showed writing gains that were slightly superior to those made by students who had no such assistance. Table 3 below describes these results.

TABLE 3

CONCORD HIGH SCHOOL IMPROMPTU THEMES, 1958-1959

Group	*Grade*	*No. of paired themes in class*	*Spring scores:* *Gained*	*Even*	*Lost*	*Percent of class who gained in spring*
(1)	9	19	9	4	6	47%
(2)	9	17	7	6	4	41%
(1)	12	18	10	3	5	55%
(2)	12	21	9	5	7	43%

Key to symbols used in table:
(1) experimental group whose themes were read by a corrector
(2) control group whose themes were read by a teacher who was served in other classes by a corrector
Note: all students tested were college bound.

Newton and Concord Student Questionnaires, 1959

In both Newton and Concord the same questionnaires which had been used in 1958 were distributed to every other student who had been served by a corrector. Again the students were neither permitted to fill them out in class nor compelled to return them. Of approximately one hundred questionnaires distributed, seventy-two were returned.

The responses to three questions were of major interest to the Committee. They may be summarized as follows:

(1) Do you consider that you did enough writing this year?
Yes—63, No—9
(2) Did you do more writing this year than last?
Yes—49, No—19, About the same—4
(3) Do you think that your writing has improved this year?
Yes—62, No—10

These students approved of Contract Correcting by a ratio of 15 to 1. Their reasons included the highly detailed comments of the corrector as well as the personal attention through conferences which the corrector was able to give the student. One student wrote, "I am in favor of the Contract Correcting program because the corrector got to know me very well and was able to get down to the fine points and give me a good working over." Disapproval of the project was accompanied in three cases by statements that "the teacher should do her own work." Although students tended to feel that, on the whole, correctors seemed to grade more easily than teachers, the comments of teachers and reader do not indicate significant differences in their standards of measurement.

Newton Impromptu Themes, 1959-1960

The experimental design for the Contract Correcting program at Newton in 1959-60 included two major additions to the previous

design. First, non-college bound seniors were included among the groups of students who were served by correctors. And second, sophomore classes were given extensive attention for the first time by Contract Correctors. All students involved with a corrector wrote impromptu themes in the fall and spring.

Since the Committee had found certain difficulties involved in permitting teachers to select their own assignments for the impromptu themes, the Committee set the following topic for the 1959-60 themes:

"Plan and write a carefully organized discussion of the idea of the following quotation. You may agree or disagree, but in either case you should use examples and illustration to support your statements. Your ideas and the way you put them together are more important than the number of words you write.

> "The records of the human race are striking proof that there is, in fact, no progress, and that the common belief in progress is nothing but illusion."

Two readers from the Educational Testing Service read the completed themes. The readers were asked to judge the themes according to a set of criteria set up by a member of the Harvard faculty for judging Sequential Test of Educational Progress essays. Directions to readers asked that each theme be considered in light of the following points:

(1)	convincing	unconvincing
(2)	organized	chaotic
(3)	deep	superficial
(4)	limited	broad
(5)	specific	vague
(6)	fluent	stilted
(7)	strong	weak
(8)	cultivated	vulgar
(9)	correct writing form	incorrect writing form
(10)	conventional grammar	substandard grammar

The readers were then directed to give the themes a grade of from 1 to 7, 1 being low and 7 high. The grade was to be based on the reader's general impression of the theme's ability to measure up to the criteria listed above. As in previous years, the readers had no knowledge of when or by whom the themes had been written.

The test results from the 1959-60 impromptu themes are consistent with those from the 1958-59 themes (Table 2) to the degree that they indicate that students of high intelligence in grades eleven and twelve who are assisted by a corrector tend to show more gains in writing skills than comparable students who have no assistance from a corrector.

The sophomores of high intelligence who were assisted by a corrector also showed gains somewhat superior to sophomores who had no such aid. The non-college bound seniors did not appear to profit greatly from the assistance of a corrector. It should be remembered, however that the evidence at hand is neither completely consistent nor conclusive.

TABLE 4

Newton High School Impromptu Themes, 1950-1960

Group	*Grade*	*No. of paired themes in class*	*Spring scores:* *Gained*	*Even*	*Lost*	*Percent of class who gained in spring*
(1)	12*	22	18	2	2	82%
(2)	12*	23	5	3	15	22%
(3)	12*	21	9	7	5	43%
(1)	12**	27	9	10	8	33%
(2)	12**	23	5	7	11	22%
(3)	12**	21	6	4	11	25%
(1)	12***	24	6	6	12	25%
(2)	12***	20	7	6	7	35%
(3)	12***	20	5	5	10	25%
(1)	11*	29	18	6	5	62%
(2)	11*	22	11	4	7	50%
(3)	11*	23	11	6	7	48%
(1)	11**	24	16	5	3	66%
(2)	11**	20	5	7	8	25%
(3)	11**	22	10	5	7	45%
(1)	10*	24	18	2	4	75%
(2)	10*	29	17	6	6	59%
(3)	10*	25	11	7	8	44%
(1)	10**	21	8	5	8	38%
(2)	10**	31	11	8	12	35%
(3)	10**	24	9	2	13	39%

Key to symbols used in table:

(1) experimental group whose themes were read by a corrector
(2) control group whose themes were read by a teacher who was served in other classes by a corrector
(3) control group whose teacher had no corrector
* college-bound students of highest intelligence
** college-bound students
*** non-college-bound students

Concord Impromptu Themes, 1959-1960

The testing program in Concord for 1959-1960 was similar to that used in 1958-1959. Instead of writing impromptu themes on Educational Testing Service assignments, however, students wrote on the same topic as that assigned to Newton students for the 1959-1960 tests.

The themes from Concord were judged by the same readers and by the same criteria as those used at Newton.

Two classes of seniors of matched intelligence and two classes of freshmen of matched intelligence again participated in the project. The two classes who had received aid from a corrector showed gains that were not only superior to those shown the previous year by the aided classes, but far superior to the performance of the unaided classes.

TABLE 5

CONCORD HIGH SCHOOL IMPROMPTU THEMES, 1959-1960

Group	*Grade*	*No. of paired themes in class*	*Spring scores:* *Gained*	*Even*	*Lost*	*Percent of class who gained in spring*
(1)	9	28	18	5	5	64%
(2)	9	25	6	6	13	24%
(1)	12	17	14	2	1	82%
(2)	12	24	9	4	11	37%

Key to symbols used in table:
(1) experimental group whose themes were read by a corrector
(2) control group whose themes were read by a teacher who was served by a corrector in other classes
Note: all students tested were college bound

Newton and Concord Student Questionnaires, 1960

In both Newton and Concord questionnaires similar to those used in the 1957-1958 program were distributed to every fourth student who had been served by a corrector. As in the previous years, students were neither permitted to fill them out in class nor required to return them.

About fifty per cent of the questionnaires were returned. Of this number, approximately ninety-five per cent favored continuation of the Contract Correcting project. A typical set of responses is given below.

1. Do you feel that your writing has improved this year?
   Yes, my writing has improved this year. Mainly, because I've been able to have the advantage of two people correcting the papers. I know fully what my mistakes have been. Also because we have had to write more, I have had to think more.
2. Did the work of the corrector in marking your papers make your writing of later papers easier?
   Yes, the corrector's comments made me aware of my mistakes, and I then tried to remedy them.
3. What differences, if any, did you notice between the papers corrected by the teacher and those done by the corrector?
   The corrector did a more thorough job than the teacher had time to do. The corrector was more exacting than the teacher. She picked out every mistake.

4. Do you feel that there were any disadvantages in the use of a contract corrector in your class? Give examples.
   Because the corrector seemed to be so thorough, she seemed to mark our mechanics more severely than the teacher would.
5. Do you think the papers were slower being returned because ... the reader?
   No, papers have never been returned quickly in any of my classes.
6. Were you satisfied with the symbols used in marking your papers? Were you always clear about the nature of an error from the way in which it was indicated?
   Sometimes I had trouble understanding symbols but that was from my own lack of knowledge. Yes, the errors were always clearly indicated.
7. In what ways were your conferences with the reader of practical value?
   She would explain fully to me my mistakes, making them clearer.
   Do you have any suggestions for the improvement of the use of conference time?
   I think that conferences should be scheduled during the day in study halls so that we don't have to stay after school.
8. Are there any ways in which the reader might have been of more help to you?
   I wish I could have had more time to talk to the reader.
9. Would you be satisfied to have your papers read by a corrector again (assuming that you were going to be in high school another year)? Please indicate why or why not.
   Yes, even though my grades may have been lowered a few points by the reader's picking up every minor mistake. I realize that she did it for my own benefit. It is helpful to the teacher too.

Quincy Impromptu Themes, 1959-1960

The Committee decided to test the effectivness of Contract Correcting on the junior high school level; with the cooperation of authorities from the Quincy Public Schools the project was established in Quincy in the fall of 1959. Classes of high, average, and low intelligence were involved. Teachers were asked to use their corrector for one class of students, while not using the corrector for another class matched with the first class in intelligence and grade level.

Impromptu themes were written by both groups of students in the fall and early spring. The Committee assigned the following topic.

"Boys and girls in other countries know very little about the activities which we have in our American schools. In two or three paragraphs describe one of the following so that someone who had never seen it before would know what it is like:

The drum major of a school band
A school art exhibit
A school assembly program that you liked
The school gymnasium
Cheerleaders
A school sight-seeing trip

The impromptu themes were graded by the same readers who had judged the themes from Newton and Concord. Although the readers did not know when or by whom the themes had been written, they were informed that the themes were written by junior high school students. The Committee hoped that this knowledge would enable the readers to see the junior high school themes in perspective and not as compared with the work of high school students.

Of the seven high intelligence classes aided by a corrector, four showed significant gain scores. Of the four medium intelligence classes aided by a corrector, two showed significant gain scores. Of the two classes of lower intelligence aided by a corrector, one showed gains.

It was noteworthy in this testing program that all control groups, those receiving no aid from a corrector, showed significant gain scores, while six corrector-aided classes showed little or no gains. This would indicate that when correctors are new to a school system they are unable in most cases to become effective immediately.

It is probable that the inconsistencies which occurred in the 1957-1958 Newton test results reflect this same phenomenon. Thus it becomes very difficult to conclude, after Contract Correcting has been in operation for only a year in a community, whether the program is and will be in the future an effective means to improve student writing. On the other hand, the 1958-1959 and 1959-1960 Newton and Concord test results indicated the effectiveness of the correctors by the gain scores which certain groups of students achieved. It will be interesting in this light to compare impromptu theme scores from the 1960-1961 Quincy tests with those from 1959-1960.

It will be noted in Table Six below that a "Reader's Digest Mean Gain Score" is included. The Reader's Digest New Standard Vocabulary Test Form A was taken by all students in the fall and spring. The figures in the table represent the mean gain score of the classes in the spring test. The corrector-aided classes showed no significant gains over the unaided classes.

TABLE 6

QUINCY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IMPROMPTU THEMES AND READER'S DIGEST STANDARD VOCABULARY TESTS, 1959-1960

Teacher	*Group*	*Grade*	*No. of paired themes*	*Spring Scores:* *Gained*	*Even*	*Lost*	*Per cent of class who gained in spring*	*R.D.† Mean Gain score*
A	(1)	7-9*	20	11	6	3	51%	8.0
	(2)	7-8*	22	16	3	3	73%	9.9
B	(2)	7-2*	23	14	6	3	61%	11.1
	(1)	7-1*	21	7	9	5	34%	8.2
	(1)	7-1A*	23	7	6	10	30%	7.2
C	(2)	8-10***	25	18	6	1	72%	7.2
	(1)	8-3***	30	8	10	12	27%	5.1
	(1)	8-2*	28	19	4	5	68%	7.0
	(1)	8-1*	24	21	2	1	87%	4.3
D	(1)	9-8***	25	18	5	2	72%	5.3
	(2)	9-7**	28	18	9	1	64%	7.0
	(1)	9-6**	21	12	6	3	57%	7.9
	(1)	9-5**	19	14	3	2	74%	7.3
E	(1)	9-8***	30	9	9	12	30%	7.7
	(2)	9-7**	26	14	8	4	54%	.3
	(1)	9-5**	17	2	0	15	12%	6.0
	(1)	9-2*	23	3	1	19	13%	6.9
	(1)	9-1*	28	14	8	6	50%	3.5

Key to symbols used in table:

(1) experimental group whose themes were read by a corrector
(2) control group whose themes were read by a teacher who was served in other classes by a corrector
* high intelligence group
** average intelligence group
*** low intelligence group
† Gain score is expressed by the number of new words learned

Quincy Student Questionnaires, 1960

In the spring of 1960 questionnaires were distributed to all students who had been served by a contract corrector. The suggestion was made that the questionnaires be completed and returned, although little pressure was exerted on students to comply with the suggestion. Eighty-seven per cent of the questionnaires were returned, indicating a high student interest in the project.

With the exception of three classes belonging to one teacher, the majority of students in all intelligence groupings responded affirmatively to the idea of Contract Correcting. Students particularly appreciated the rapid return of corrected papers and the conferences with their corrector. One eighth grade boy said, "Last year Miss X (teacher) never talked to me about my papers. Now Miss A (corrector) helps me any time I ask her, even [sic] I don't ask her."

In response to the question, "Would you be satisfied to have your papers read by a corrector again (assuming that you were going to be in junior high school another year)?", ninety-five per cent of the students replied "yes", two per cent had no opinion, and three per cent answered "no".

On the negative side, it must be commented that one corrector seemed to clash with the students whose papers she was reading. As noted above, the three classes for whom she read did not favor the continuation of Contract Correcting. In fact, pupils in these three classes responded ten to one against continuation of the project. Ironically, however, student writing in these classes showed the highest degree of improvement over the year of all classes involved in the project.

A typical set of responses from one of these three classes is quoted exactly below.

1. Do you feel that your writing has improved this year?
   Yes a little but not much. It did improve but just through the help of my English teacher.
2. Did the work of the corrector in marking your papers make your writing of later papers easier?
   No it made it awful because you try to think of things that she said and get all mixed up.
3. What differences, if any, did you notice between the papers corrected by the teacher and those done by the corrector?
   The teacher was much easier and understanding about the language we used.
4. Do you feel that there were any disadvantages in the use of a contract corrector in your class? Give examples.
   Didn't like to write papers when she would read them or correct them.
5. Do you think the papers were slower being returned because of the reader?
   No just about the same.
6. Were you satisfied with the symbols used in marking your papers? Were you always clear about the nature of an error from the way in which it was indicated?
   No I couldn't understand her corrections. They didn't make any sense.
7. In what ways were your conferences with the reader of practical value?
   No value at all.
   Do you have any suggestions for the improvement of the use of conference time?
   Get to know the corrector better and then we will be able to write better cause we won't mind writing personal things then.
8. Are there any ways in which the reader might have been of more help to you?
   (No response)
9. Would you be satisfied to have your papers read by a corrector again

(assuming that you were going to be in junior high school another year)? Please indicate why or why not.

No I never want (corrector) to touch another paper of mine because she doesn't put much feeling in her marking of our paper. She always finds fault and never said anything about our good part. I'd much rather have (teacher) correct our papers than (corrector) any day.

CHAPTER FIVE

Contract Correcting and the Community

The Parent Questionnaire, Newton, 1957-1958

The Committee circulated questionnaires among the parents of students who had been aided by a reader. The object was to determine the degree to which parents felt that their children had been helped or hurt by the project. Care was taken in the preparation of the questionnaire to assure that points of particular interest to the Committee would be discussed, while at the same time permitting parents the opportunity to introduce new ideas.

The questionnaire was distributed by the six teachers involved in the project to every fifth student aided by a reader. Although it was suggested that students return the completed questionnaires, no pressure was exerted to enforce the suggestion. Twenty-one of the questionnaires were returned.

Only in a few cases were the responses of certain validity, for the answers betrayed little knowledge of the program. Parents had picked up a few remarks from their children, but in general the answers gave the effect of having been solicited from the youngsters almost immediately prior to filling out the questionnaire. This is due possibly to the fact that publicity of School and University Program for Research and Development projects has been kept to a minimum, though Newton teachers involved in Contract Correcting were encouraged to make the project clear to any parents who were concerned about it. Again, statistical evidence here is not constant, for not all parents answered all items of the questionnaire. The following summarizes parental responses:

1. Have you heard anything from your son or daughter about the Contract Correcting experiment? Have your child's comments indicated enthusiasm for it or displeasure with it?
   All indicated they had heard something about the project, although several parents said they had not heard about it until the questionnaire was brought home.
   Eight parents responded that their child was enthusiastic; five that the child was indifferent; and eight reported negative reactions due to insufficient contact with the reader.

2. In what ways, if any, do you feel that your son or daughter has been helped by a contract corrector in his class? Is he writing better than at the beginning of the year?
   Nine parents reported that the child had been helped by the conference and the interest that the reader took in his work. One parent reported that the teacher seemed to have more time to help the students individually. Four parents noted improvement in the student's work, but did not attribute it to the project. Three parents felt that the writing had not improved.
   Have you noticed an increase in the number of written assignments in English?
   Thirteen parents responded "yes" to this question.
3. Do you feel that there have been any disadvantages in the use of a contract corrector in your child's class?
   Eleven parents said "no".
   Four answered that they did not know.
   Disadvantages listed were delay in returning papers (1), and lack of opportunity for personal contact between reader and student (2).
4. Do you think he has profited from the conference with the reader?
   Eleven parents responded that the student had profited, due to the reader's interest in him.
   Five parents said that the child had not profited from the conference due to its infrequency, or because the reader merely repeated what was on the paper.
   Three parents did not know
5. Would you have liked the opportunity to meet the contract corrector working with your son or daughter?
   Fourteen parents said "yes".
6. Can you suggest ways in which the contract corrector might have been more helpful to your child.
   One parent said that the teacher should have given the reader more information about the child. Others suggested more writing and more conference time.
7. In the light of present teacher shortages and the many demands of the teacher's time, would you recommend the continuation of contract correcting at Newton and its extension to other school systems?
   Fifteen parents said "yes", none of whom qualified his approval with suggestions for extension of the reader's function to include closer contact with the pupil.

The Parent Questionnaire, Newton and Concord, 1958-1959

A similar questionnaire was circulated in Newton and Concord during the late spring of 1959. Fifty parents of students who participated in the project were asked to comment on Contract Correcting. Forty-one parents completed and returned the questionnaires. Of these, 29 expressed approval of the plan and the desire that it continue, 3 expressed disapproval, and 9 did not give an opinion. Of those expressing approval, the largest number gave as their reason the relief

afforded the teacher, while others stated that the child's work had received more careful attention under the reader. The conferences between student and reader received unanimous approval, with parents hoping that even more time would be available in the future. One of the parents expressing disapproval wrote, "I feel if a teacher is to help a child she must look over work carefully herself. How else can she see what group and individual errors exist?"

The Parent Questionnaire, Newton, Concord and Quincy, 1959-1960

In the late spring of 1960, every third student who had participated in the project in the three towns was asked to take a questionnaire home, have his father or mother complete it, and then bring it back to school. Again, no pressure was exerted to bring forth responses.

Approximately forty-one per cent of the questionnaires were returned. Of these seventy per cent of the responses favored the idea of contract correcting and its continuation, twenty-six per cent of the responses indicated that the parent was not familiar with the project, and four per cent of the responses were to the effect that the experiment should be discontinued.

The most important and inclusive query on the questionnaire was: "In the light of present teacher shortages and the many demands on the teacher's time, would you recommend the continuation of contract correcting in your town and its extension to other school systems? Why, or why not?"

The following answer in the affirmative indicates some of the thinking involved in parents' replies to the question. A parent from Concord said:

"Yes. It should be very helpful to a teacher who is in agreement with this system. It increases the amount of writing she can expect from the student and enables him to go ahead and apply without delay the suggestions he has received from the corrector. It makes available a supply of qualified and talented persons who might not be able to teach in a regular full-time position due to lack of that much time. If used on a greatly expanded scale, however, there should be some training program to insure coordinated and unified aims, grading, requirements, etc."

General Community Reaction

On the whole it can be said that the communities involved in the experiment judged it as a positive contribution to the learning process in the public schools. The project received favorable publicity from Boston newspapers, with the result that the teacher-reader teams have been asked to give talks and advice to other communities which anticipate similar projects.

Mr. Harold Howe, II, former Principal of Newton High School and now Superintendent of Schools in Scarsdale, New York, has pointed

out that the community should be aware that the reader not only brings to students a specific knowledge of appropriate and effective expression, but she also brings to the student and to the school new ideas. Readers involved in this experiment have been well educated women who could help to infuse the schools with that intellectual vitality upon which students may thrive. In a sense, through their contract correctors, the communities involved in the experiment have contributed in more than a material way to the prosperity of their schools.

The positive relationship between Contract Correcting and the schools has been demonstrated by the willingness of two communities, Newton and Concord, to support the project financially after foundation funds have expired. Newton now supports six readers, while Concord supports four; Quincy's readers are still being subsidized through Harvard's School and University Program for Research and Development. Clearly the communities involved in the project have recognized some value in the use of Contract Correcting.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Findings and conclusions are discussed here in question-and-answer form under the four general headings of (1) Students (2) Teachers (3) Readers, and (4) Community.

Students

Does the use of lay readers cause a noticeable improvement in student writing?

This, the most-desired objective, is, of course, the most difficult to measure. So many variants enter into the composition program that no single sampling or series of samplings is ever fully reliable. The fact that a student writes less well in the spring on an impromptu theme than he did in the fall is no valid indication that there had not been a substantial gain in his writing skill over the academic year. Factors over which the composition program has no control whatsoever can easily affect the result, as we have noted in the instance of college-bound seniors who, having learned of college acceptance, were inclined to slacken their efforts in the spring. This is not to rationalize away our disappointment that results have not been as decisive or as dramatic as we had hoped, but only to see the ever-present imponderables when we deal with something as directly personal and creative as composition. The data of the preceding pages prove real accomplishment in certain areas and under certain kinds of arrangement, and the major of these is that ability in writing improves *with each year* that the student is served by a reader. There is, in other words, an accumulative factor. The student who, over a period of the three years of senior high school, has been served by a lay reader (not necessarily the same one, though this is highly desirable) shows, as a result of the meticulous attention to his work which a lay reader makes possible, demonstrable progress in expository writing. There would seem to be some relation between the kind of curriculum and the gain; that is, college-bound youngsters tend to show greater progress, but here the results are not conclusive. For the present, proponents of the use of

lay readers should be cautious about assertions that the plan will help students write better. At the outset of any program it probably will not. It should be added, however, that both when written compositions in the spring showed definite improvement and when they did not, a majority of the teachers, readers, and even the students in all classes served by a reader felt that improvement had taken place. Among teachers and readers, this feeling was virtually unanimous.

Does the use of lay readers cause an increase in the amount of student writing?

Very definitely, yes. Even when the teachers of this experiment felt that the amount of writing they had students do was adequate and even above the amount being done in other places—when, that is, they felt that the consideration of more writing was least interesting for them—they found that the use of the reader was definitely increasing the number of writing assignments. If, as many teachers of writing believe, to write more frequently is inevitably to write better, because a self-correcting process sets in, then writing more often may have a definite relation to writing better.

What, other than more frequent writing, is of benefit to students in the lay readers program?

The regular conferences between reader and student. A charge often made against the program when it was in its planning stages was that the relationship between reader and student would be so distant and impersonal that the reader could not possibly evaluate the papers with full understanding of the student's achievement or problems. When readers and students sit down together at regular intervals and talk over the student's compositions, the fear of impersonality is dispelled. The amount of personal attention to his work is being increased. Furthermore, reader conferences with some students make possible more teacher conferences with all students.

Teachers

Does the use of lay readers provide teacher relief. If so, how soon after the beginning can this relief be expected to set in?

This is probably the surest claim that can be made for the use of lay readers. Except in the very early stages of the program, no teacher of this experiment has ever denied that the use of the reader made possible hours of extra time for planning, for professional improvement, or simply relaxation. At the outset of a program, it can be

assumed that some additional effort of the teacher may be required, as the reader becomes familiarized with the teacher's expectations, school routines, and the mechanics of the pick-up and delivery of papers. But even these difficulties can be smoothed over if *both* teachers and readers participate in a Workshop experience prior to the opening of the school year. Here, in general sessions, principles of composition can be discussed and the marking of papers reviewed; and as teachers and readers are paired off, individual teacher demands can be understood and prepared for. An important recommendation follows from these observations: whenever possible, teacher-reader teams should be kept together from year to year; understandably, efficiency increases with the two working cooperatively.

When the use of lay readers is proposed in a school system, can some teacher resistance be expected?

Certainly, and it is desirable that such resistance should exist. Teachers of English should indeed be jealous of the papers of their students and of attention to them which conceivably might be other than competent and professional. This is why it is most essential that teachers be called in for every step of the planning process. Their confidence in the use of lay readers is indispensable.

In this program we deliberately included some teachers who, if not actually hostile to the plan, were at least sceptical. We even included a prima donna or two—mavericks who tend to resist any experimentation or research as invasion of their eminent domain. In every one of these special cases, the teachers became enthusiastic about the program after seeing it in operation. They are now among the strongest supporters of the use of lay readers; one has even spoken in favor of the idea at a national meeting.

Should teachers have some say in the selection of readers?

By all means, though if the program planned is to be a sizable one, the participation of teachers in the selection might preferably be left to a committee which would be representative.

Does the length of a teacher's experience have anything to do with how well the teacher functions in the program?

Teaching composition is one of the most difficult of the English teacher's responsibilities—possibly the most difficult. For this reason, the seasoned teacher *generally* does a better job with student writing, *everything else being equal.* It is important to stress here, however,

that we are talking about teachers of *composition*, not of grammar, spelling, punctuation, or literature. In this program we have used both veteran and inexperienced teachers without noticing significant differences when we felt that both were secure in their understanding of what writing achievement is. As a matter of fact, some of the teachers coming at present from our teacher training institutions are much better prepared in the teaching of writing than has been the case for several decades.

Readers

Is there an adequate supply of readers or potential readers?

Yes. In all three of the communities of this experiment, we found many more potential readers than anticipated. Selecting from the number of applicants for the membership of the Workshop was a very difficult task, and selecting the performing readers from the members of the Workshop even more difficult. Paul Diederich of Educational Testing Service reports that in the sixteen communities of his experiment he found no shortage of readers anywhere. There were always more than could be used and all well-qualified. The dismissal of readers for inability to function adequately has been, in both this experimental and Diederich's, insignificant.

What special training should readers have?

Apart from the general preparation in their academic backgrounds, readers need some immediate review and refresher experience in composition. This was the purpose of the Workshops held before the beginning of the program in Newton, Concord, and Quincy. These Workshops included testing, a discussion of the philosophy of composition, a review of English fundamentals, theme evaluation, and finally theme writing by the readers themselves. On the basis of their performance in the Workshop the final readers were chosen. It is the conviction of this experiment that the Workshop is essential and that it should be participated in by both teachers and readers.

Can the readers be counted on to perform their work enthusiastically?

Most certainly. As a matter of fact, they tend to become overzealous and to perform many more tasks than they are called upon to do. They become enthusiastic defenders of the program in the community and establish for themselves an identification with the school which makes them public champions of the school's policy. We have seen no case of a reader's closer familiarity with the school

resulting in criticism of the school before the public. As the readers work with students, they become immediately aware of the acute problems which English teachers are facing, and they begin at once to interpret this situation for the public at large.

Community

How have communities reacted to the use of lay readers?

All three communities of this experiment have responded enthusiastically. The best evidence of this is that both Newton and Concord have continued the use of lay readers beyond the time of Foundation and HEW subsidy. There is every indication that Quincy will do so after the subsidy ends this year. Lay readers in both Newton and Concord have been increased in number and are now being paid for by the local Board of Education.

Is the program spreading?

Yes. The Harvard program has furnished materials of its activities and reports of its practices to school systems all across the nation. Several programs, particularly that at Cleveland Heights High School, Ohio, have been set up under Harvard direction. Even universities, where the number of graduate students available for correcting purposes is limited or non-existent — for example the University of Dayton, Ohio, and the State Colleges of Massachusetts — have asked for information and possible direct assistance in setting up programs. The use of lay readers or composition aides is at present one of the liveliest topics of discussion at meetings of the National Council of Teachers of English and at regional and state meetings as well.

The Cleveland Heights Program has been mentioned. Here are two paragraphs from a report recently prepared by Dr. Leonard Freyman, English Coordinator in the System.

> We are happy to say that this program now in its seventh month has been tremendously successful. Every aide remained with the teacher to whom she was originally assigned during the first semester, and both teachers and aides are enthusiastic about the program. At the beginning of the second semester, because one of the aides was 'infanticipating' and asked to be temporarily relieved from her assignment, we changed this one aide to an applicant on our alternate list. Otherwise, all aides who began the program with us are still with us.
>
> Opinionnaires sent to teachers, composition aides and students revealed the following: Initial evaluation by the teachers concerned indicated that five of the six are working harder at composition initiating the mechanics of the program and working with control classes. Nevertheless all are enthusiastic about the results they are producing. Five of

the six have devoted all extra time and effort to the program so have not been able at this time to save time for planning or additional professional growth. One indicated that time was not conserved but that energy and spirit are higher. Aides in their evaluation indicated great satisfaction with the program. Three indicated that they would have liked a little more workshop time for training. Three suggested some improvements in mechanics. Pupils in their evaluation indicated the following: 84% said that their writing has improved; 14% felt that it had not; 2% were not sure. 58% felt that the work of the composition aide made their writing of themes easier; 38% felt writing was not easier; 4% were not sure. 58% would like a composition aide next semester; 30% would not because of so many assignments in writing; 12% were indifferent.

The Committee on Contract Correcting
Edwin H. Sauer, Chairman